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THE

GREAT METROPOLIS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LORDS AND COMMONS."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

SECOND SERIES.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

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PREFACE.

As it was impossible, in the limited space of two volumes, to do anything like justice to so comprehensive a subject as "The Great Metropolis," the Author has followed out his plan by the publication of a Second Series of the work. The very great success of the first two volumes, coupled with the circumstance of their being necessarily incomplete of themselves, has induced the Author to lose no longer time in the preparation of the present, than was rendered unavoidable from the nature of the undertaking.

London, May 3, 1837.

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THE

GREAT METROPOLIS.

CHAPTER I.

ALMACK'S.*

Interest it creates — Its origin — Constitution—The Season—Admission into—Anxiety to be admitted—Its influence on the *fashionable* world—Splendour of its balls—Its dances—Unhappiness of ladies in it—The injury it inflicts on many *families*—Difficulty of breaking up the monopoly.

ALMACK'S! What a sound! With what powerful emotions does many a fair bosom beat at the mere mention of it! It is the subject of the nocturnal visions of thousands of both sexes in the fashionable world: it is the subject also of

* It may be right to mention, that for much of the information contained in this chapter, I am indebted to one who has been many years a member.

their day dreams. It is the everlasting topic of conversation in the aristocratic circles. You hear it repeated a thousand times, perhaps a day. "Are you a subscriber to Almack's this season?" "Have you applied for admission to Almack's?" "What a dashing ball that was at Almack's on Wednesday!" "I did not see you at Almack's last night!" "Have you heard that the Mortons have applied for admission to Almack's and been rejected?" "I'm sure those vulgar low-bred creatures the Cottons have not the least chance of being admitted: it was a piece of great assurance on their part to suppose the ladies-patronesses could listen for a moment to an application from such a quarter." "O, I never saw the Marchioness of Londonderry look so well as she did at the last Almack's; she was so splendidly dressed." "That brute Lord Landonvale was quite tipsy at Almack's last night: I was sorry to see mamma give him the slightest countenance." These, and a hundred other expressions, are quite current in the higher circles on the subject of Almack's. Beyond

those, however, who are members, scarcely any one has any idea of what Almack's really is; and even by such as are subscribers, comparatively little, with few exceptions, is known of it.

When, or under what particular circumstances, Almack's was originally instituted, is not exactly known. It is first accidentally noticed by Horace Walpole, who says, "There is a new institution which begins to make, and if it proceeds, will make, a considerable noise. It is a club of both sexes, to be erected at Almack's on the mode of that of the men of White's. Mrs. Fitzroy, Lady Pembroke, Mrs. Leynell, and Miss Lloyd, are the patronesses." I have not been able to ascertain the precise time at which this was written; otherwise it were easy to find out the year in which Almack's was instituted. It may, however, be said in general terms to have been about a century ago. The institution took its name, just as our modern clubs do, from that of the proprietor of the rooms in which the meetings were held. The same title is still retained, as in the case of White's and Brookes's, though Almack

has slept with his fathers for considerably more than half a century. The present proprietor of the rooms in which the balls take place, is Mr. Willis, to whom I shall have occasion to refer two or three times in the course of the chapter.

Soon after the institution of Almack's, it was for some years discontinued, owing to some misunderstanding among the ladies-patronesses. It was re-organised on such an extensive scale, and under such powerful patronage, that it assumed a sway and importance in the fashionable world which its foundresses never contemplated. That influence on the *bon ton* it still continues to exercise. And a more despotic power never existed. All that we read about political slavery in other countries, is not to be compared to this. The fashionable world are bound hand and foot to the half dozen fair tyrants in King-street, St. James's. The conclave who sit there around a table covered with red cloth, every Monday during the season, have the power, by their single fiat, of making or unmaking entire families. They can open or shut the doors

of fashionable life on them, by the mere circumstance of giving or withholding a ticket to Almack's. The proudest and most aristocratic family in the land are fain to bow down, and with cap in hand, to use a homely but expressive phrase, supplicate "a subscription" from this "coalition cabal." To be a member of Almack's is a sure passport to the very first society: it is to give either a lady or gentleman the highest status in the world of fashion to which human beings can attain. To be refused admission to Almack's—I mean that sort of refusal which is well known to be tantamount to a perpetual exclusion—is to blast one's prospects, in so far as aristocratic society is concerned, for life. What renders the absolute power of the committee of Almack's the more terrible to the lords and ladies of the land is, that it is often exercised in the most capricious manner. If either of the ladies-patronesses have any personal dislikes to gratify—and I need not say the probability is, that all of them have many—they have it in their power to get their "little sweet re-

venge" when sitting in full divan around the "board of red cloth." They unhesitatingly refuse to admit the applicant; and they are not called upon to assign any reason for pronouncing a fiat of exclusion. The thing is done at once: there is no appeal. It is in vain that the parties boast, perhaps, of belonging to one of the most ancient and noblest families in Great Britain: in the fashionable world, if excluded from Almack's, that will not avail them. How the unlimited power which the committee at Almack's possess, is exercised, will appear from some of the statements which I am about to make.

The committee consists of six ladies-patronesses. Formerly there were seven; but since the Princess Lieven, the celebrated Russian politician and beauty, quitted this country, the number has been only six. They are the Countess of Jersey, the Marchioness of Londonderry, Lady Cowper, the Countess of Brownlow, Lady Willoughby D'Eresby, and the Countess of Euston.

These ladies-patronesses are self-elected.

Whenever one of them dies or resigns, the others meet together, and after a great deal of canvassing of the merits of the various parties proposed by each other, the lady for whom there is the greatest number of votes is chosen. When the office of lady-patroness is vacant, innumerable intrigues—many of them such as, one would think, no lady, far less a lady of the highest class, would on any consideration be a party to —are set on foot to carry the private ends of some of the ladies-patronesses. The Countess of Jersey may have some friend she wishes, for particular reasons, to be appointed to fill the vacant office. Lady Cowper has another. Then comes the din of war. Each of the other three ladies-patronesses may possibly have some "dear friend" in her eye whom she would like to see around the "board of red cloth;" but usually one or two lord it—perhaps in this case I should rather say, "lady" it—over the rest. And whenever it is seen that those possessing the most sway, either from imperiousness of manner or some peculiar persuasiveness when pressing

their point, are determined to insist on the parties they propose, the more good-natured and less decided of the number forbear to urge their suit, and join with either of the two great belligerents. A well and obstinately contested point of this kind by these arbitresses of fashion and influence in aristocratic society, is one of the richest scenes which could possibly occur. Not long since there was "a contested election" of this kind in Willis's Rooms, when the "ruling passion," and every other passion, of the two ladies-patronesses who opposed each other on the occasion, were shown off, as a sportsman would say, in excellent style. The conventional rules of aristocratic society were all set at defiance: the usual courtesies of life were disregarded, and the two patronesses made use of terms to each other's faces which they had often employed behind each other's backs. Each, in plain English, lost her temper, and vented her spleen in terms which one does not expect to hear escape "fair ladies'" lips. Of the two, Lady Dominant, who had usually got things her

own way before, worked herself into the greatest paroxysm of passion. She coloured deeply; one would have thought all the blood in her body had risen to her face. Had she been single, and a host of lovers been at the moment at her feet, the terrific frown which clouded her brow would have scattered them *instanter* in all directions; and not one of them would ever afterwards have penned a sonnet to her "beautiful eyes," her "lovely lips," or to any other real or imaginary attraction. The tones of her voice, too, as well as the words themselves, bespoke the violence of the storm which raged in her bosom. What a pity that under so fair and fascinating an exterior, there could be so much of fierce and furious passion. The Baroness Positive was somewhat more measured in her indignation; she did not, at any rate, lose the command of her temper so entirely. The language she made use of in attack or defence, just as the case happened, was not so unmeasured as that employed by her opponent; but there was, if possible, more of deep-rooted ill-nature in it,

and it must have left a much deeper sting than the plain-spoken words of Lady Dominant. The truth in this case was, as it would be found in many other cases not altogether dissimilar —the truth was, that the belligerents had long been rivals for supreme dominion in Almack's, and in this instance they contested the point with such violence and pertinacity, not because they cared anything for the party whose cause they espoused, abstractedly considered, but because the principle involved was their own relative power at the board. Hitherto Lady Dominant had, as before-mentioned, carried things, in most cases, whatever way she liked. This the Baroness thought ought not to be suffered; and with the view of trying what might be done in the way of curtailing her ladyship's influence, by a bold and pertinacious resistance to her authority, she nominated a friend for the vacant office, in opposition to the protégée brought forward by her rival. The effort, however, was unsuccessful. Lady Dominant succeeded by a majority of one in carrying her point, there being

three of the other ladies-patronesses in favour of *her* "dear friend," while only two espoused the cause of the Baroness.

The elections of ladies-patronesses are for life, —only any one is liable to be expelled should a majority decide on the expediency of such a step. This, however, is never done, unless it unfortunately happened that the party had made some egregious false step in morals, which had been "duly brought under the public eye." When one lady-patroness becomes peculiarly obnoxious to one or more of the other ladies-patronesses—no very rare case, by the way—the course adopted for getting rid of the "odious creature," or the "horrid woman," is to annoy her in every possible way. The insults and indignities heaped on one of the divan, by Lady Dominant and one of her creatures, some years ago, exceeded the bounds of credibility, and were the subject of universal remark at the time. The insulted party at last sought refuge from the persecution to which she was subjected, in resignation.

The season at Almack's usually commences in the second week of April, and ends about the middle of July. The committee, *alias* the six ladies-patronesses, meet every Wednesday between the hours of three and six, at Willis's Rooms, for the purpose of deciding on all applications for admission, and making the other requisite arrangements for the various balls. Each lady sits down at the round table with her desk before her; while the secretary, rather a good-looking sort of personage, not quite a youth nor yet stooping under the antiquity of existence, sits a little behind. The triangular pieces of paper which Mr. Willis has previously put into a box, containing the various applications for admission, are then taken out, opened, and read. The claims of each candidate are then discussed *seriatim.* And such a discussion! Could the poor unhappy parties themselves—no matter which sex has the honour of claiming them—only overhear all that is said of them,—I mean when the committee are not at once unanimous for their admission,—they would then have some

notion, if they never had any before, of what Shakspeare meant when he makes Hamlet say he will "speak daggers" to his mother. Miss Manchester applied at the beginning of last season for a ticket. "Who is this Miss Manchester?" inquired Lady Dominant. "Does anybody know anything about her? I never heard the name before."

"Nor I," said the Marchioness of Duffus. "Some upstart vulgar creature of city origin, I suppose," she continued, giving her head a most contemptuous toss.

"She is a very respectable young lady; I have seen her two or three times, and she is possessed of an immense fortune," said Baroness Positive.

"Made, I have no doubt, by her father's spinning-jennies," said Lady Dominant, sneeringly.

"Her father is a manufacturer in the Manchester trade, but he is a most respectable man: my brother and he are on very intimate terms," said the Baroness.

"Well, surely the impudence of these low-bred, vulgar people! it exceeds everything," said the Countess of Speyside. "Why, after this, it would not surprise me to see every coal-merchant's daughter in the city applying for admission."

"O! the very idea of the thing is monstrous," observed Lady Rafford. "Besides, the creature's a perfect fright. You know, my dear Baroness, you pointed her out to me one day in the Strand."

"Quite a turnip face, I dare say," said Lady Dominant.

"And cats's-eyes, I'll answer for it," observed the Marchioness.

"You are both right," said Lady Rafford. "And you might have added carroty-hair. The very thought of such a horrid-looking creature, and a cotton-merchant's daughter, waltzing at Almack's, almost throws me into hysterics."

"I think you are unreasonably severe," observed the Baroness. "She is heiress to a princely fortune. Her father is worth half-a-million,

and her hand would therefore be deemed a prize by any nobleman in the land. My brother, Colonel Vincent, has begged of me as a particular favour, to do all I can to get her admitted, and I therefore hope your ladyships will give her a voucher."

"Yes," said Lady Dominant, bridling up, "yes, if we wish to disgrace ourselves and the order to which we belong. If we did, I dare say," she continued, biting her lip and tossing her head, "I dare say the piece of vulgarity would come to our balls dressed in some of her father's cotton-cloth. Better admit our housemaids at once."

"I'll engage," said Lady Rafford, assuming an air of unwonted self-importance, "I'll engage this would-be-fashionable Miss Vulgarity could not acquit herself, though she were here, so well as one of my waiting-maids."

"O!" said Lady Dominant tartly, and with some haste, "O, let us be done with this poor empty-headed but aspiring cotton-spinning

Miss; the very idea of listening for one moment to her application is perfectly monstrous."

Miss Manchester was of course refused a ticket, there being no one but the Baroness to support her claim. Neither would she but for the circumstance that her brother, who has since married Miss Manchester, had so urgently pressed her to do so.

But it is where there is a personal ill-will on the part of some of the ladies-patronesses towards the party applying, that these ladies give the best proof of what they can do in the way of mangling one's character and wounding one's feelings at the same time.

Gentlemen have to apply in the same way as ladies for their tickets of admission. And their several characters are often subjected to a severe ordeal. In cases, however, where the candidate belongs to a family of great distinction, and above all, if he have a high title, and be an "elder son," great allowances are generally made for him. The Countess of Guernsey says,

and no one can question its truth, that if the ladies-patronesses were to be *too* strict on the question of morals, there would be no gentlemen at all at Almack's; the ladies would have the balls to themselves, and would require to make partners of each other, the best way they could. In the case of the "detrimentals," viz. younger brothers, however, the same allowances are not made. Their being *roués*, is often a very convenient pretext for their exclusion. The observation of a lady-patroness, in a younger brother's case, when it is wished to refuse him admission is, that "No man's daughter would be safe in his company; none of us could admit him into our houses." The most dissolute "elder brother," however, in England, provided he has a good title, and either has, or is heir to, a good estate, finds ready admission, when there are no personal feelings in the matter, both into Almack's, and into their houses. In either case he encounters nothing but smiling faces both on the part of the mothers and daughters.

Sometimes, when the ladies-patronesses are not very decided either in acceding to or rejecting an application, they agree to give a ticket to the party for one night, or three tickets for a set, as they are called, of the balls. In those cases where the candidate is deemed particularly eligible, either from rank, beauty, friends, or any other cause, the ticket is granted for the season, and is called a subscription. The price of each ticket is seven-shillings-and-sixpence. About twenty years ago it was a guinea; but a supper was then provided, and no additional charge made. Now there is no supper; there is nothing in the shape of refreshments but tea and lemonade, and the worst of it is, that both articles are so miserably bad that it requires an effort to drink either. The lemonade is sour as vinegar; while to apply the word tea to the stuff called by that name at Almack's, were one of the most unwarrantable perversions of language ever perpetrated. Give it to any person without calling it by any name, and that person will

soon find one for himself. He will at once call it chalk and water.

When the six goddesses of fashion and manners are seated at the table to decide on the claims of the various applicants, they have three baskets beside them. The first and largest basket contains the triangular billets in which the applications are made. The second basket contains the names of the parties whose claims are admitted; and in the third are the names of those who are doomed to exclusion. It sometimes happens, however, that this exclusion may not be intended to be perpetual. There may not be any very strong objection to the parties; but the list of members may chance to be pretty full at the time, and the claims, in the meantime, of other persons are considered superior to theirs. Those, on the other hand, as in the case of Miss Manchester, or some "detrimental," who in consequence of his elder brother being married and having a family, has no earthly chance of ever being aught but a "detrimental,"—in such cases, where the doom is in-

tended to be everlasting, the names of the parties are entered in a book kept by the ladies-patronesses for the purpose, which saves all future trouble should the parties ever apply again. Their names being found in this black-book settles the question of their admissibility at once.

When parties are refused a ticket, the painful intimation is conveyed to them in a printed circular, with a blank left to be filled up with the unfortunate name. The intimation is laconic enough. It assigns no reason for the refusal. It is to this effect:—"The ladies-patronesses' compliments to Mr. or Miss So-and-so, and are sorry they cannot comply with his or her request." This is not sent to the residence of the parties by the two-penny post, or by any of Willis's servants. All intimations of rejection are left with Willis, and the parties only learn the result by calling on him for the "answer," as it is termed. These answers, like the applications, are all contained in three-cornered notes.

When the claims of a candidate are admitted, the ticket, or voucher, as it is called, signed by one of the ladies-patronesses, is left for him with Willis. Every one on going to the balls must present his ticket: it is not enough that Willis or any other person knows quite well that he has been admitted.

It is impossible to conceive the interest shown by the candidates and their immediate friends as to the fate of their applications. Instead of waiting to learn in the usual way, they often have Lord This, or Colonel That, whom they know to be acquainted with one or other of the ladies-patronesses, waiting on horseback at the corner of King Street, to ascertain from her lips the result. If the party be admitted, the other flies to his residence with the rapidity of lightning to announce the joyful news. If not admitted, you may read the fact from the appearance of the horse. No perspiration is dropping from the animal: there is no foam about his mouth: he at least is a gainer by the rejection of the friend of his master: no spurs have been

darted into his sides on his way to the residence of the unsuccessful candidate.

No one not acquainted with the fact from observation, or from the communications of persons who are so, could have any idea of the influence put in requisition to gain admittance into Almack's. It is a fact which may startle some when they hear it stated, but it *is* a fact, as the aristocracy will all bear testimony, that many families evince as great anxiety, and make as great exertions, to get their daughters into Almack's, as they do to get their sons into parliament. And the disappointment, when they do not succeed, is often greater in the former than it is in the latter case. In the one case it is only looked on as a question of the preponderance of family influence in a particular part of the country, and the comparative popularity of a certain class of principles; in the other, it is regarded as the lowering of the unsuccessful party in the scale of social importance: a putting, as it were, an extinguisher on one's pretensions to move in a certain sphere of life. A young lady, before

she receives a subscription to Almack's, and after she has had that distinction conferred on her, can scarcely be regarded as the same person. She may, after dancing at Almack's, aspire to move in a circle of society, of which she could not have dreamt before. She has now the chance of receiving proposals for her hand in marriage, from parties who would not before have deemed her on a level with themselves. It is the same with the male sex. The gentleman who is admitted to Almacks, though only moving in a comparatively humble sphere of life before, may now hold up his head in the best society to be met with in the country; and he may, without incurring the risk of being considered presumptuous, solicit the hand of any lady in the kingdom.

But independently of the opportunities which admission into Almack's affords of getting into the very highest order of society afterwards, such admission is a matter of great importance both to unmarried ladies and unmarried gentlemen, from their being there brought into con-

tact. One great object which the ladies-patronesses have in view, and of which they never lose sight in their admission of candidates, is to bring about matches between the sexes. And this object is accomplished to an extent to which none but the members have any idea. There the youthful aristocracy of both sexes meet, week after week, during the whole of the season: there the young nobleman sees around him all the beauty of the order to which he belongs. The probability is, that he fixes his affections on some particular lady. They dance together, and then retire to the tea-room, which is at the furthest end of the ball-room, where, sitting down on one of the sofas, he whispers into her ear a declaration of love. She blushes; he reads—for all lovers are skilful physiognomists, whatever other people may be—he reads in her flurried countenance that she is propitious. Taking courage from such favourable appearances, he proceeds, if hurried on by the impulses of his ardent affection, to the next step, which is to propose; or, if not so very

violently in love as to be unable to restrain himself from making a point-blank proposal at once. he defers it till they meet again at Almack's next week; and then the business may be said to be done. The remaining arrangements follow as a matter of course. In the aristocratic world little time is spent in courtship, compared with that which is usually consumed in paying and receiving addresses among the middle and lower classes.

In the tea-room many elopements have been planned, as well as proposals of marriage made. It was in that small room that an elopement which excited so much interest in the fashionable world, a few years ago, was agreed on. The rich heiress had just been conducted thither by the partner with whom she had danced, under the pretext of receiving some refreshment. The father suspected nothing wrong; but lest he should observe the whisperings that passed between the parties, two ladies who were in the secret, and in the interest of the young gentleman, stood together immediately before them,

in such a position, apparently engaged in earnest conversation, as to render it impossible he could perceive that anything confidential was taking place.

So anxious are the committee of Almack's to promote matrimonial matches, that they often refuse to admit young gentlemen whom they think in marriageable circumstances, to a third season, because he has "done no good" the two first. They reason in this way:—The young gentleman who is in circumstances to justify his marrying, and who has withstood all the female attractions of two seasons, will, in all probability, become a confirmed bachelor—a sort of animal who has no business at Willis's Rooms. I think there is much sound philosophy in this reasoning, and much wisdom in the determination to give no encouragement to bachelors. They are a moral nuisance in the company of marriageable ladies,—as they also are, very often, in the society of their own sex. It is tantalising to a young lady, after having perhaps for years been, to use a homely phrase, "setting her cap" at

one of these personages—to her own prejudice it may be, in relation to other suitors, who would have proved excellent husbands,—it is tantalising to find after all that he is invulnerable to female fascination.

The tickets which are given to gentlemen candidates, whether for the season or for a set of balls, or for a single night only, are not transferable to any other party. Ladies' tickets are transferable from a mother to a daughter, from a daughter to a mother, or from sister to sister; but in no other case. No family is allowed to have more than three ladies' tickets. It is an understood thing among the ladies-patronesses, that no subscription or ticket be given by either of themselves to a lady whom the lady-patroness does not visit, or to a gentleman who is not introduced to her by a lady who is on her visiting list. No lady's or gentleman's name can continue on the list of the same lady-patroness for more than two sets of balls; nor are ladies to consider themselves entitled to the second set of balls, unless it has been so inti-

mated to them when they received their vouchers for the first. There is another regulation strictly observed by the ladies-patronesses, which is, that no lady or gentleman shall have more than six tickets from the same lady-patroness during the season.

There is one thing which has always characterised Almack's: that is the entire absence of political feeling in the administration of its affairs. The ladies-patronesses, like most of the other female branches of the nobility, have their own individual prejudices and partialities on political subjects; but they never carry them into the committee-room. Their politics have nothing to do with the election of each other when there are any vacancies, nor do they ever influence their decisions as to the admission or rejection of the candidates.

The ladies-patronesses have for many years past consisted exclusively of married ladies. This indeed, as matters are now managed, is an indispensable regulation. There are many little things connected with the discharge of their offi-

cial duties, which would not altogether suit the delicacy requisite in young misses.

The office is no sinecure. The duties connected with it are of the most arduous nature. The solicitations the patronesses are ever receiving from all parties, praying them to use their influence on this one's behalf, and the next one's behalf, were enough to try the patience of the most philosophic lady in existence. Then there is the trouble of opening and examining the host of three-cornered applications on paper, at Willis's rooms, together with a thousand other little matters which must be attended to. Those only who have had to bear the burden of so much business, can tell what its weight is. So entirely are the ladies-patronesses engaged with the cares of office during the season, that one and all of their husbands protest they are perfectly useless as regards their domestic duties. Some of these unhappy husbands wish that their being useless were the worst of the evil. Not only is everything neglected at home, to the unspeakable joy of the servants, who do not fail to

have *their* "season" too; but the Almack's mania is carried to such a height, that the unlucky husbands never know when their carriages or horses are at their own disposal, or when they are not. A lady is in ecstasies of delight when she is chosen one of the patronesses; she overlooks the trouble and fatigue in the honour and power the office confers on her; but no one yet ever heard of a husband being glad to learn that his wife had been chosen one of the ministers in this great temple of fashion; all of them have been heard rather to lament the circumstance, as one of the greatest calamities of their life, and to wish Almack's at the—I will not say where; because the poor husbands say it thoughtlessly and in the heat of the moment.

The room in which the balls take place is one of the most beautiful in London: perhaps I might say it is not to be surpassed anywhere else. When lighted up it has a most dazzling effect; and I need not say what the scene must be when crowded with all the beauty which the aristocracy can boast. The doors are thrown

open at ten o'clock; betwixt that time and eleven, the bustle and animation in St. James's Street exceeds anything which the mind can picture to itself. You hear far and near the cracking of the whip, the clattering of the horses' hoofs, the rattling of the carriages, the hallooing of coachmen and footmen; and you see the most splendid equipages, bearing with them the choicest beauty and fashion of the land, flying past you every moment, all on their way to the scene of action for the night. Dancing commences at eleven. Either Weippert or Collinet then strikes up his band. From that moment till four o'clock, there is no repose for the poor fiddlers: they, indeed, are the only mortals to be pitied there. And yet, I am not sure after all, whether that which would under other circumstances, be an intolerable labour, be not so much lightened by the "bright phalanx of beauty," as Sir Samuel Whalley would say, before them, as to be scarcely any labour at all.

Formerly the rooms were shut at twelve o'clock

precisely, and no member was, under any circumstances, whatever might be the rank of the party, admitted after that hour. Some years since, however, the ladies-patronesses came to a resolution that an exception should be made in favour of those members who belonged to either House of Parliament.

The circumstances under which this exemption in their favour was made, were amusing. The Duke of Wellington came in breathless haste one evening to King Street, just as an important debate had been concluded in the House of Lords, and rushing up to the door, requested admittance. It was then precisely five minutes past twelve. He was told by the person stationed at the door that he was too late, and that he could not be admitted. "Humph!" said his Grace, in his own peculiar manner, and looking at the person who refused to open the door, with an expression of countenance which almost petrified the poor fellow, "Humph! it's only a few minutes past twelve."

"Can't help it, your Grace; am sorry, but

the orders of the ladies-patronesses are peremptory that no one be admitted after twelve."

"Sir, open the door this instant," said the Duke, sternly.

"Can't do it, your Grace," was the answer.

The Duke, for the first time in his life, now knew what it was to command without being obeyed. The poor wight of a door-keeper though afraid of offending the Duke, was still more so of offending their highnesses, the ladies-patronesses.

"And you won't open the door then," said the Duke, once more.

"I daren't do it, your Grace: my orders are most positive."

"Then, sir, you shall hear more of this," said the Duke, and wheeling about on his heel, he quitted the place.

The circumstance having been brought before the ladies-patronesses, they came to the resolution of making an exception in favour of members of both Houses of Parliament.

The room, which is spacious and lofty, is

lined all round with two ranges of sofas. The ladies-patronesses have one sofa appropriated to themselves at the upper end. It is an interesting sight to see the various sofas gradually filling as the distinguished visiters drop, one after the other, into the room. A little before the dance commences, and when almost all have arrived, and are seated on the sofas, the scene is one which it is not for me to attempt to describe. At a late ball, a stupid old nobleman, contrary to the etiquette on such occasions, walked over from one side to another to speak to the Dowager Duchess of Rothiemurchus. The daughter of the latter gently reproved him by saying, "Your Grace must be a bold man to cross the room just now, with all eyes upon you." "He must, indeed," said a noble marquis, of great military reputation, to whom the young lady afterwards repeated the observation, "he must, indeed. I know this, that I would at any time much sooner face the enemy on the field of battle, than have walked slowly over the room, as he did, at such a moment."

In order that no one may encroach on the space set apart for the dancers, it is marked off by ropes, which extend along the room. This has the desired effect; the space intended is always kept clear; but some of the more spirited of the dancers, especially among the male sex, often dash against the ropes in the midst of the gallopade, and sometimes, by the rebound, are thrown prostrate on the floor. There would be no harm in this, if they were themselves the only parties who suffered from their "rushing," as Miss Caroline Frederica Beauclerk says, "like headstrong fillies," because it would serve to teach them to proceed at a more moderate pace next time; but the evil is, that others, and ladies too, suffer as well as themselves. When they are thrown down on the floor, it not unfrequently happens that they prove a stumbling-block to some "charming young lady," who, before she is aware, falls over them, and is stretched in the same horizontal posture as themselves. A few seasons ago, Lord Larmont had been gallopading it at such a rate, that

down he went, and in a moment three others, one of them a young lady, followed his example.

"Accidents" as they are called, from this cause, are not so common as are those which occur from the slipperiness of the floor. In order to give it a polish, it is rubbed over with some French composition, the nature of which I forget; and it matters not much though I do. This composition makes the floor very slippery, and as the gallopade, which more resembles a race than an ordinary dance, is the most common dance at Almack's, it is not surprising that "accidents" should occasionally occur on the floor. Last season, several accidents of this kind took place. The Hon. Miss Lorimer fell one evening with a tremendous crash on the floor, taking with her Lord Covesea, who chanced to have hold of her hand at the moment. Two others, a lady and gentleman, as if envying the fortune of the prostrate couple, immediately reduced themselves to the same level. The prostrate beauties, as if by an undefinable species of sympathy, uttered piercing shrieks as they

lay on the ground. In a moment every mamma and chaperon in the room, whose daughter or charge was not by her side at the time, hurried to the scene of the catastrophe in the utmost alarm. The unfortunate beauties, more frightened than hurt, were promptly raised by the gallantry of those of the opposite sex nearest to them at the time, and after shedding a few tears, all was as much set to rights as if nothing had happened.

Some idea of the gallopade at Almack's will be formed from the following lines by the Hon. Miss Caroline Beauclerk, niece of the Duke of St. Albans, herself one of the best dancers that ever occupied a floor. The poetry is by no means superior, but the picture given of the thing intended to be represented, is rather vivid.

AN ALMACK'S GALLOPADE.

Now Weippert's harp each youthful breast inspires,
A space is clear'd, the dancers take their ground,
Each dancing beau claims her he most admires—
With pleasure here all youthful hearts rebound.

But see the galoppe's graceful, joyous strain,
Makes the red rose mount high in beauty's cheeks,
Old damsels round for partners hunt in vain,
Th' unrivall'd one his favour'd fair one seeks.

Enchanting dance!—the growth of German land—
At thy gay signal fairy feet are flying;
Soft vows are made, and broke, as hand in hand
The dancers rush in speed each other vying.

Let's mark the num'rous vot'ries of the dance;—
L——— first rushes like a headstrong filly,
Cranstoun and Walpole may be said to prance,
Smith's so, so,—and ditto, Baron Billie.

E'en envy now is mute at Erskine's grace,
While Hillsborough a Hercules advances;
Who can cease gazing on Alicia's face,
Till Blackwood smiles, or Fanny Brandling dances.

St. John,—sweet Maynard,—pretty Stanhope glide,
And lively Hill inciting gentle Karr,
Meade and Regina ambling side by side,
In dancing this, are all much on a par.

Oh! now observe, Maude, Littleton, and Brooke,
Flowers so pure, you'd deem from heav'n they fell,
While N—t—n, queen-like in her very look,
Would make a desert bliss,—a heav'n of hell.

Desperate rush a band of raw recruits,
With ardent minds, and no regard to time—
I beg their pardon, but they are such brutes,
They must excuse my writing such a line.

Hark! a sound as if from a percussion,
Follow'd by piercing shrieks, arouse our fears;
Chaperons rise alarm'd, and dread concussion—
A prostrate beauty is dissolv'd in tears.

Think not the prospects of the night are turned,
For a bright vision glances in the ring;
No sooner is he seen, than all are spurn'd,
They seem his subjects,—he appears their king,

* * * * in whom the gift of dancing lies,
For graceful ease none can with him compare,
"Swift as an arrow from the shaft he flies"—
Envied by men, and worshipp'd by the fair.

See him, like the forked lightning flashing,
No ear can catch the sound of his footfall,
Down the room the gallant * * * dashing,
The pride of Almack's—darling of a ball.

All things at length must cease, and so must this;
I'll end what bumpkins call the gallopade;
Sweet unmeant speeches pass from Miss to Miss,
All go to flirt, drink tea, and lemonade.

The galoppe's ended, so my lay must stop;
As a finale I propose to sing,
(While love-sick beaux, to belles the question pop,)
With loyal heart and voice—Long live the King!

Some further information relative to an Almack's dance, will be gleaned from the following lines, which appeared in the "Court Journal" a few years since. It will be seen that particular allusion is made to one of those "falling" occurrences, to which I have referred, as by no means uncommon on the slippery floor of Willis's large room. The lines are headed

A SCENE AT ALMACK'S.

Oh! let me sing the "sprightly gallopade,"
Which seems so easy, but which is so hard,—
At least to dance it well. I do not mean
To romp it, as, alas! too often seen.
Well may mammas and chaperons then exclaim,
"Why, what a dance! 'tis really quite a shame
To suffer it!" but no—I mean the *slide*,
With which the graceful Danischwild doth glide
So smoothly o'er the boards. Here let me tell
The sad mishaps, which Wednesday last befell
Some young aspirants for the "galoppe's" fame,
At Almack's ball—but whom? I must not name.

One round the room his partner safely bears,
While *one* his ancient war-cry thinks he hears—
"Charge, Chester! charge!" He *did* at such a pace,
(Against the ropes,) that falling on his face,
Quite stunned the hero lay upon the ground,
His hapless partner too, some gather round;
While murmurs from the lips of many a beau,
"Alas! that such a man should fall so low!"
But while the music in a lively strain
Strikes up, and dancing recommenced—again
It ceased, that *two more* might be raised
From the glib floor, which often they had praised
For being "smooth and slippery like glass."
Ah! little did they think how soon, alas!
'Twould prove their saying—and before
The dancing ceased, upon that very floor
Another couple fell. Then, practise, beaux!
Perhaps you may improve, perhaps—who knows?
Mind, ere you go again to Almack's ball
To gallope well, like some, else not at all!

In reference to the above, the following lines were written, under the head of an

ANSWER TO THE SCENE AT ALMACK'S.

Ye spiteful tongues, who deem it well
To speak the luckless fate of those who fell
At Almack's glitt'ring ball,—O! give their due
To all! and sing the triumph of the gallant two

Who fell, only triumphantly to rise,
Regardless of the smiles of gazing eyes.
No right, indeed, had envious lips to say,
" Upon the floor" the fallen C—st—r lay,
For lightly springing from the ground,
His trembling partner bearing round,
Again *he* braved the gallopade,
By all allowed to be so hard.
Not so the waltzers—they, (O thoughtless crew!)
Along the slipp'ry boards their way pursue
Till careless of each other's headlong course,
The couples meet with stunning force—
Their balance lost, down, down the foremost go!
Four prostrate lie! one luckless *belle* below!
Nor could their fallen spirits soar
Like some! for *they* could dance no more!
And, C—st—r, had you staid to see *their* fall,
Well might you say,—" *Waltz* well! or not at all!"

The gallopade and the waltz are now the only things danced at the Almack's balls. I have heard the question asked, why is it so? I have also, let me add, heard it said, in answer to the question, that it is because that if new dances were to be introduced, it would have the effect of " thinning the floor," inasmuch as noblemen and others could not " go through them." To be sure, there would remain another

alternative: they might go again and get steps from their French dancing-masters; but that alternative would be a troublesome one, and the class of persons who frequent Almack's like to be put to as little trouble as possible. The waltz, therefore, though so severely condemned by every person of moral feeling, and even by persons—witness Lord Byron—whose notions of morality are by no means strict, is the favourite dance at Almack's.

The number of members of Almack's is between 700 and 800. The largest attendance ever known on any one occasion was about 650; which is a number much too great for the size of the room. The average attendance is 500. This was the number present at the concluding ball of last season. It was a fancy ball. Some idea will be formed of one of these balls by the following account of the closing one in July last, drawn up by a gentleman who has witnessed many such splendid scenes:—

"Wednesday night closed the series of these

splendid balls for the season. As announced, it was a fancy dress ball, and it was of a very brilliant description; about 500 of the nobility and gentry were present.

"The ladies-patronesses entered the ball-room at an early hour, attired in most splendid costumes, and the display of brilliants we never saw surpassed, even at a birth-day drawing-room. The Marchioness of Londonderry wore a brilliant diadem with *bandeaux* of the same costly jewels *en coiffure:* a tunic of white tulle, embroidered in silver, and a dress of rich white satin, embroidered to correspond; a *ceinture* of costly brilliants. Countess Cowper wore a head-dress of great magnificence, composed of ruby-coloured velvet, the front edged entirely with diamonds and enclosing four brilliant stars, composed of diamonds of great magnitude. The Countess Brownlow, Lady Willoughby D'Eresby, and the other ladies-patronesses, were also attired in most magnificent dresses.

"The ball-room was thown open at ten

o'clock, illuminated by a profusion of wax-lights, the orchestra tastefully ornamented with garlands of flowers, and the *tout ensemble* was splendid. The majority of the company appeared in fancy dresses, national costumes, and naval and military uniforms. Included in the company were several foreigners of rank; amongst the ladies who made their *debût* the Princess Galitzin and the Princess Wittycapstein were noticed particularly from the splendour of their costumes and personal attractions.

"At 11 o'clock, dancing commenced to the music of Collinet's fine quadrille band, led by Nadaud, and including Tolbecque, Remy, Rhode, Hatton, &c., from the King's Theatre. Muzard's quadrilles, "L'Eclair," "Micheline," and "La Tete de Bronze," were finely played, as also the favourite waltzes, "Le Remede contre le Sommeil," and others by Strause. A gallopade terminated the dancing, and "God save the King" closed the balls for the present season.

"" It was after five o'clock next morning before the company* had retired.

* Amongst the company were—

Princes—Galitzin and Wittycapstein.

Princesses—Wittycapstein and Galitzin.

Marquisses—Douglas and De Somery.

Marchionesses—Londonderry and De Salsa.

Earls—Sandwich, Falmouth, Beauchamp, Clonmel, and March.

Countesses—Brownlow, Mansfield, Beauchamp, Chichester, Norbury, Rosse, Oxford, and Cowper.

Lords—Palmerston, Grimston, Ranelagh, Brabazon, Alford, Ridsdale, Loftus, A. Loftus, W. Lennox, F. Beauclerk, Combermere, Dalmeny, Powerscourt, Bridport, Earlsfort, Maynard, A. Paget, H. Vane, Foley, and Leveson.

Ladies—Willoughby D'Eresby, John Russell, Georgiana Russell, C. Cavendish, Hardy, St. John, Gossett, A. Arden, H. Mitchell, C. Fane, Beauchamp Proctor, C. Murray, E. Murray, B. Codrington, A. Poulet Dillon, E. Fielden, Rendlesham, De Clifford, Pringle, Quintin, Ashbrook, Dudley Stuart, Dynevor, M. Cotes, Hatherton, Knightly, E. Palk, E. Smythe, M. Pelham, A. Pelham, Gage, F. Bentinck, S. Kerr, Mildmay, Strutt, C. Dundas, H. Toler, A. Parsons, Scott (2), Bromley, Blackwood, Trollope, and Ponsonby.

Barons—Litzenhern and Wedel Fedberg.

Foreign Counts—Henri de Castella, G. Shovaloff,

" Sets of quadrilles were formed in the course of the evening, by—

The Hon. Spencer Cowper, with the Hon. Miss Maynard.

The Hon. James Howard, with the Hon. Miss Cotton.

The Marquis of Douglas, with Miss Strachan.

The Earl of March, with Miss Codrington.

The Hon. C. Forester, with Miss Beauclerk.

The Hon. W. Ashley, with Miss F. Beauclerk.

A. Esterhazy, Seckendriff, Plessen, Stanislaus, Koskiowski, Jules Koskiowski, D'Ugglass, and Shovaloff.

Sirs—H. Willoughby, E. Codrington, E. Cust, W. B. Proctor, C. Knightly, F. Domville, F. Trench, R. Gordon, W. Brabazon, C. Des Vœux, and E. Cust.

Honourable Messieurs—Cole, C. Cavendish, R. Petre, C. Berkeley, W. Ashley, Granville, Berkeley, C. Forester, Thellusson, C. Edwards, G. Scott, J. Howard, and S. Montagu.

Honourable Mesdames—Petre, Ponsonby, Vansittart, L. Stanhope, W. Ashley, John Gage, G. Berkeley, Tollemache, Law, and Thellusson.

Honourable Misses—Willoughby, Somerset (2), St. John, Rice (2), E. King, Mitchell, Cotton, Dillon, Thellusson, Flower, Maude, Littleton, Gage (2), Hood, G. Kinnaird, Maynard, &c.

"The two latter young ladies wore elegant costumes, as Spanish Flower Girls."

Perhaps there is no instance on record in the history of the world, of such an assemblage of beauty as is exhibited at the most numerously attended balls at Almack's. At drawing rooms and queen's levees there may be more of the fair sex present; but then rank alone is the qualification for admission to these; while the resolution adopted by the ladies-patronesses of Almack's, of not admitting more than three of a family to their balls, affords them an excuse for excluding any persons they think fit. And they generally do make a point of preferring beauties to "horrid creatures." In fact, however much they may differ on other matters, they are quite unanimous in this, that "quizzes"—which translated into more intelligible English, means ugly girls—are by all means to be kept out of Almack's. I need not add that the intrinsic charms of the female frequenters of Almack's are greatly heightened by their splendid dresses and the magnificent appearance of the room.

Of these dresses I say nothing, because I cannot describe them. That is not in my way. Judging from the specimen which Mr. W., the author of a late popular work, afforded of his abilities in describing ladies' costumes, in the case of some of our female nobility, there is no doubt he would excel in "pencilling" the ladies' dresses at Almack's. I, however, have not the honour of being Mr. W., nor have I the happiness of possessing his talents—not certainly, at least, in this particular department of literature. I therefore content myself—I *must* do so—with saying, that altogether the scene is, indeed, perfectly dazzling: to foreigners who have seen nothing of the kind it is sometimes quite overpowering. Provincial papers in reviewing the Annuals, usually say, that the contents, both in poetry and prose, are all so meritorious that they do not know "which to select:" I have often thought that young noblemen and others who may be contemplating "a match" must be pretty much in the same predicament when examining the female "contents" of Almack's on

one of the ball nights. They are *all* beautiful, as the same journalists say. If there were only a sprinkling of beauties, as is the case in most miscellaneous assemblages of women, in the higher as well as in the humbler walks of life, then a male candidate for matrimonial bliss would have little difficulty in making his choice: but how are you to make up your mind where there are, perhaps, a couple of hundred marriageable ladies before you, *all* lovely—*so* lovely—so *equally* lovely, that you cannot for the life of you say which is the loveliest! If the ass starved between the two bundles of hay, owing to his not being able to decide which had the preferable claim on his stomach, is it to be wondered that a poor young fellow who meditates matrimony, should hesitate when he sees two hundred eligible ladies before him, whose personal claims are so equally poised? He feels precisely in the situation of Macheath in the "Beggar's Opera" of Gray. He ejaculates to himself, "How happy could I be with either,—were the other dear charmers away!" I could ne-

ver find any excuse for Lord Eldon doubting for years as to how he should decide certain Chancery cases which came before him: had his lordship come to Almack's to choose a wife, I should not have quarrelled with him had he doubted till doomsday. Almack's, I fear—and I do not wonder at it—will have to answer for making many a man a bachelor for life, who, perhaps, had he never set foot in it, would, like most other men, have sobered himself down in wedlock. The scene has bewildered him: he did not know which of the beauties to choose, and therefore made no choice at all. He admired them *all* a great deal too much to do the others an injustice by "buckling with *one*."

You would suppose from the soft and smiling countenances you see everywhere around you, that there were nothing but simplicity and happiness in the bosoms of all present. Could you read those bosoms, whether of old or young, you would come to a very different conclusion. The mothers and chaperons dressed, as one of the Misses Beauclerks would say, in their "regula-

tion" satin robes, with their velvet or crape hats, "ornamented" with waving plumes of feathers, are severally putting their ingenuity to the rack to "hook" some elder son with a title and a good rent-roll for their "loves" of daughters, or for girls committed to their charge. These antiquated ladies, with "rouged faces and false frontlets," have, it must be admitted, a very difficult game to play. They have not only to get "the girls" in the way of the "prizes," but they have to keep them out of the way of the detrimentals. Their minds, from the moment they enter the ball-room to the time of quitting it, are occupied with the one thought of how the evil may be avoided and the good attained. Their pleasure or pain, therefore, depends entirely on how far they fancy they succeed or fail in this great object. Perhaps they see some rival mamma, or chaperon, supplanting them; their envy and mortification in that case are indescribable. If they are successful in entangling in their meshes some "suitable" youth, then they are envied by others in their turn. I

wish it were possible to see what bitter animosity, what deadly dislike towards each other, two rival mothers or chaperons can conceal under a fair exterior. But besides these sources of uneasiness and anxiety to those elderly ladies who have "lovely creatures" on their hand at Almack's, and are desirous of transferring the burden to some elder unmarried son, there are a thousand little things which are unknown to all but themselves. To get a conspicuous place in the ball-room in which to station themselves—a place at which young Miss may display her charms to advantage, is often no easy matter. Care is to be taken that the lady beside which "my daughter" sits be not dressed in such a way as to impair the effect of her personal attractions. "My dear," said the Marchioness of Gardenstown, on the last night but one of Almack's last season, just as Miss was pointing out to "mamma" a particular place at which she thought they might be comfortably seated; "My dear, you must not sit beside that horrid old creature, the Duchess Dowager of Longbride; she wears

such a profusion of pink and yellow, that it will make you look *so* pale." "Jemima, my love, why don't you show a little more animation in dancing with Lord Budget," said the Countess of Leuchars, on a late occasion, to her second daughter, just as she had re-seated herself after quitting the floor. If "my love" be seen speaking to a detrimental, "mamma," or the lady who plays chaperon, is within a few removes of hysterics. But we shall never be able to form any idea of the sources of misery there are to those who have young ladies to dispose of, even in Almack's—all happy as the former appear to be —until we are favoured with a faithful mental autobiography of some intelligent chaperon.

With regard to the young ladies, again, who are to be seen at Almack's, there is immeasurably more misery among them than the superficial observer would believe. One who does not look below the surface would infer from their smiling faces, the lightness of their step in the dance, and the general gaiety of their appearance, that if there be happiness in the world

they must be the possessors of it. Could those who think so prevail on any half dozen of them to give a candid statement of their feelings, from the time they entered Willis's Rooms until the coach was called, they would see how far they were wide of the real state of the case. None but young misses themselves can form any conception of the misery which, on such occasions, is caused to them by seeing attentions paid by the male sex to their rivals. A single look or smile from the object of a young lady's affections to some other young lady, is like plunging a dagger into the bosom of the former. It is also a prolific source of misery to young ladies when they see families of distinction paying more attention to some of their acquaintances than is paid to themselves. It is well known in certain circles that one young lady has almost broken her heart because an acquaintance was repeatedly asked to dance by noblemen of consideration, while she was suffered to occupy a seat by her mother's side the whole night. For one young lady to hear the charms of another

young lady, with whom she is on visiting terms, warmly praised, is of all punishments the worst you could inflict. It may be, again, that "the loved one" is not among the number of noblemen and gentlemen present, and that her mind is wandering in foreign climes after the object of her affections. What is Almack's, with all its glitter and glare, to such a person? It is no better than a wilderness. To her ears the music has no charms; the dance no attractions. She has no sympathy with those around her. She would feel herself as much in society among an equal number of those "composition" ladies who grace a hairdresser's window. The severe remarks which young ladies make on each other at Almack's sufficiently prove how unhappy some of them are while there. There is a malignity in some of these remarks, which one might in vain search for elsewhere, and which painfully contrasts with the lovely countenances and snow-like bosoms of those who make them. I once heard the Rev. Thomas Dale, a popular poet as well as divine,

say, that there is many a bosom encased in silks and satins which is as hard as the very stones of the street on which the parties tread. Could the rev. gentleman inspect the bosoms of the beauties of Almack's, he would find too many proofs of the justness of his observation.

But this is an ungrateful topic, and therefore I will dwell on it no longer. Four o'clock is the usual hour at which the ball begins to break up; but the dance is often prolonged till five. In June and July the sun sometimes shines into the ball-room, and impairs the effect of the artificial lights which shone so brilliantly throughout the night. Poor, indeed, is the appearance of these lights, when they have to compete with their rising rival of the east; and equally poor is the appearance of the beauties who remain till so late an hour, compared with what it was while darkness was over the face of the earth, and the profusion of lights in the ball-room shone with undiminished splendour. The rosy hues which, but a few hours before mantled their cheeks, are now, as a gifted authoress, in a poetical piece of

exquisite beauty, says when speaking of the effects of death, "fled like fancy's dream." Now the countenances of the fair are, to use the phraseology of an old Scotch song, "pale and wan." The lingering beauties themselves have not only lost all colour, but all animation; they are little better than so many lifeless statues; Nor does their dress appear to the same advantage as before; one soon discovers many little blemishes in their finery, which the glare of the wax-lights only served to conceal. It is bad policy for young ladies to remain longer at Almack's, or at any other ball, than four o'clock in the morning. They may rely upon it, that no one ever fell in love with them after that hour. I appeal to the married ladies who have been to Almack's, whether their husbands proposed to them after the hour of four o'clock in the morning. Not one, I am certain, could answer me in the affirmative. If the truth were known, I doubt not it would be found that many a young lady has dissolved the spell which had before bound her lover to her, by allowing him

to see her faded charms after four in the morning. A beauty "fagged to death," as young ladies themselves say, by the fatigues of dancing and the want of sleep, is in a much more unfit condition for being seen, though in her ball-dress, than she would be in her morning's dishabille.

Such is Almack's. And is this the place—the far-famed place—some one will say, of which we hear so much, but whose proceedings are enshrouded in so much secresy? It is indeed. And it is to gain admission to this place, that such great and anxious efforts are made by so many families. I stated in the beginning of the chapter, that the importance of Almack's arises from the supreme power it exercises over the world of fashion. It will be asked, how came a half-dozen ladies to acquire the power of making or unmaking whole families by a single word, just as their caprice may dictate? Like all other unlimited sovereignties, it was of gradual growth. It began, as before mentioned, by four ladies starting, nearly a century since, a sort of female club. The aristocracy of that period became

members of the association; and the decisions of the directresses, or committee of management, were acquiesced in. As the number of members increased, they became more and more particular as to the persons they admitted. Other ladies-patronesses of distinction, succeeded the originators of Almack's, and they by degrees assumed new powers, the exercise of which was submitted to by the higher classes. In this way Almack's has risen to its present importance and weight in the fashionable world, no one ever having made a successful attack on the administration of its affairs. It is a despotism which fills some of the highest families in the kingdom with fear and trembling. There are thousands whose joy at its overthrow would be unbounded; but still every one shrinks from the idea of an open and vigorous effort to accomplish so desirable an object.

It has been the fate of Almack's to be attacked from all quarters. I have spoken of the abuse heaped on the institution, and on the ladies-patronesses for the time being, by those who

have been refused admission. The attacks of such parties are natural enough. The fox pronounced the grapes to be sour, when he could not reach them. But what is surprising is, that a work which, for nearly a quarter of a century, has been the strenuous defender of everything aristocratic, should make a dead set at an institution the most thoroughly exclusive that ever existed in this country. Who could ever have believed that such a passage as the following could by possibility have found its way into the "Quarterly Review?" Yet so it is. It appeared a few months since in that journal, and went the round of the newspapers:—

"The rise of Almack's (an exclusive fashionable dancing assembly at the west end of London) may serve to illustrate the mode in which this sort of empire was consolidated. A few pretty women, not in the highest rank of the nobility, met at Devonshire House to practise quadrilles, then recently imported from the Continent. The establishment of a subscription ball was suggested, to which none but the very *élite*

were to be admissible; the subscription to be low, with the view of checking the obtrusive vulgarity of wealth. The fancy took, and when it transpired that the patronesses had actually refused a most estimable English duchess, all London became mad to be admitted; exclusion was universally regarded as a positive loss of caste, and no arts of solicitation were left untried to avert so horrible a catastrophe. The wives and daughters of the oldest provincial gentry, with pedigrees traced up to the Heptarchy, have been seen humbling themselves, by the lowest acts of degradation, to soften the obdurate autocratesses. The fancy has gradually abated, and the institution is now tottering to its fall; but its origin is worth recording, as a ludicrous phenomenon in the progress of society."

Had any one seen this paragraph in the course of its journeyings round the newspaper press, without the appendage "Quarterly Review" to it, he would have at once concluded that it must have originally graced the columns of "The

Poor Man's Guardian," "Cleave's Police Gazette," or some other of the then unstamped. "The Quarterly," however, in its anxiety to destroy Almack's, falls into one or two misstatements. It is not correct to say that it is now tottering to its fall. The number of members, which, as I have before stated, is between 700 and 800, is greater than at any former period, and the thing is carried on with as much spirit as ever. The same anxiety to obtain admission still exists, and it is those only who have been unsuccessful in their applications, who endeavour to cry the institution down. The probability is, that the attack in question by "The Quarterly," emanates from some such disappointed party.

Their high mightinesses, the ladies-patronesses, have inflicted a world of pain on thousands of individuals, and have made whole families miserable for life by their arbitrary and harsh decrees. The poor African slave does not quail and tremble more under the apprehension of the lash of his tyrant master, than do many of the

first families in the land at the bare idea of being refused admittance to Almack's. It is no secret—it is not so, at least, in certain circles—that some time ago an amiable young lady of high birth and excellent connexions, actually died of a broken heart, because the cabal in King-street, for reasons best known to themselves, rejected her application for a subscription to Almack's. It is added, that her physician, having ascertained the cause of her illness, took occasion to submit the case to the empresses of fashion, when one day assembled in full divan, appealing at the same time to their humanity for the admission of the young lady; but, as the story goes, without effect. The decree had gone forth that she should be excluded, and there was no reversal.

People talk of monopolies: will any one point me out a monopoly so monstrous as this? It will be asked, why then not abolish it? But how, let me ask in return, is that to be done? It is a system far more close, and despotic, and oppressive to the fashionable world, than the political

system which prevailed before the passing of the Reform Bill, was to the people generally; but the evil is, that you cannot well reach it by legislative acts. Strictly speaking, it is one with which Parliament cannot properly interfere; there is no law which it infringes; it is just as legal as any other society or club which is known to exist. But even suppose some legislator, who had himself been shut out from Almack's by the high behests of the half dozen tyrants in petticoats, were to make a proposition to put it down, how, think you, would such a proposition be received in either House? Why, the dandies in both Houses, headed by the Earl of Falmouth in the one, and by the Hon. Grantley Berkeley in the other, would rise *en masse* to put an extinguisher upon it. It would not be entertained for a moment. The ladies-patronesses have too many friends in both Houses for that.

The question again recurs, how is this nuisance in high life to be abated? That is the very question which of all others I cannot answer. I can see no probability of its being put

down but by some serious disagreement among the ladies-patronesses themselves. It is a scriptural adage, that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Let the genius of discord be fairly introduced among their ladyships, so as to induce three or four of them to resign at once, and you put an immediate extinguisher on Almack's. I see no other probable way by which the thing can be done.

Since the above was written, the name of the Countess of Lichfield has been added to the list of ladies-patronesses, again making the number seven.

CHAPTER II.

POLITICAL OPINIONS.

Tories—Whigs—Radicals—Destructives—Proceedings at meetings of the Destructives—Scenes at their public dinners—General remarks.

It may at first sight appear difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain with any degree of accuracy the comparative numbers of Tories, Whigs and Radicals, in a city containing so extensive a population as does the metropolis of this country. It is undoubtedly true, that some years ago no computation could have been made of the relative number of these different parties, which could have been depended on as constituting an approximation to the truth. The

case, however, is different now. The passing of the Reform Bill, conferring the elective franchise on every householder in the metropolis who occupies premises of a ten-pound yearly rental, has furnished us with data by which the state of public opinion on political subjects in London may be placed beyond all doubt. As the metropolis is, for elective purposes, divided into the city of London, the city of Westminster, and the five burghs, we have only to examine the state of the poll at these various places, when any disputed election has been brought to a close, to ascertain the number of Tories and Whigs; for it is to be observed, that as there is scarcely a single Tory or Whig among the lower classes, those holding either set of opinions are almost all householders. Taking, then, in the first place, the aggregate number of persons who have of late years polled in the Tory interest, in the various districts into which the metropolis is divided, I should estimate that number at 20,000; if to these be added 5,000 more, for young men in respectable situations, who are only

lodgers, and have consequently no vote, it will give a total of 25,000; and this, I am confident, is above rather than below the number. The existing metropolitan Tories, however, it is but justice to observe, are morally strong if numerically weak. They are all Tories from principle; not from interest, or from fashion, as used to be the case; and their decided attachment to their principles, and the sacrifices they make for them, though hitherto unable to defeat the Liberal party in the contests which take place for the representation of the metropolis, have a great direct influence on the representation of the country, and on the legislation of the senate. The city of London has its Conservative club; Westminster has its Conservative club; and the different boroughs, with the exception, I believe, of the Tower Hamlets, have severally their Conservative clubs. Then there is the Carlton Club. The Tories are thus closely banded together, and co-operate with each other, with a cordiality unknown among the Liberal

party. In this way they not only set an example of union and enterprise to the Tories throughout the kingdom, but their leaders in the various districts of the metropolis meet together whenever any emergency arises, and concert measures for defeating the Liberal party in all parts of the country. No sooner does a vacancy occur in the representation of any town or county throughout the United Kingdom, than a meeting takes place among the metropolitan Tories, to consider the propriety of starting one of their own party against the candidate in the Liberal interest. If determined on, after mature deliberation, that their cause is to be subserved by putting up a Tory candidate, the thing is done in an instant; and so complete is the machinery which they bring to bear on the contest, that all of a sudden you see as much harmony and zeal and activity on the part of the Tory electors, as if the thing were the result of a long premeditated and carefully concerted local plan. The London Tories are unquestionably entitled

to the credit of being admirable tacticians; the Liberals compared with them are mere novices in the science of tactics.

The Whigs are not nearly so numerous in the metropolis as the Tories. Judging from the results of elections in which there have been Tory, Whig, and Radical candidates, I should estimate the number of genuine Whig householders, as not exceeding 15,000. In Marylebonne and Finsbury, we have had Whig candidates along with those in the Tory and Radical interests, and the state of the poll as regards the Whigs on these occasions has been such as to justify me in not giving them credit for a higher number than that I have just mentioned. As nearly as I can compute, from a somewhat intimate knowledge of the opinions which prevail among lodgers, filling respectable situations, I should set down the number of Whigs of this class, as being about 5,000, making the entire number of genuine metropolitan Whigs 20,000. Of themselves, therefore, they are a helpless party. Inferior to the Tories in number, they are

immeasurably inferior to them in point of talent, tactics, and activity. But for the Radicals coming to their aid, not one of them could ever have the good fortune to cross the threshold of office, not even though it were only to be unceremoniously kicked out again. Few of them, indeed, without the assistance of their Radical allies, would find their way to St. Stephen's. In their hearts they thoroughly despise the Radicals, though to them they owe their existence as a party. Are the Radicals then to be blamed for supporting the Whigs? Certainly not; they only act in supporting them, as men of the world. They are only reducing to practice their favourite maxim of "half a dinner is better than no dinner." The Radicals, in supporting the Whigs, are perfectly aware of what they are about; they see quite clearly the game they are playing. Nothing could exceed the contempt they entertain towards the Whigs in their hearts: they think the Tories a far more honourable and consistent class of politicians; but then, they know that while from the Tories they can get

nothing they ask, they can, by the necessary quantum of kicking and bullying, get from the Whigs half the amount of their demand on account, and afterwards the other half when the process of kicking and bullying and abusing, has been carried on for a certain length of time. The Whigs, therefore, whether as representatives or as ministers, are, to all intents and purposes, under the government of the Radicals, and as the latter know that nothing is to be made of their Whiggish friends by persuasion or coaxing, they resort to the only other mode of government within their reach, namely, the government of the whip, which they lay on in true Radical style.

With the exception of those who have no political opinions at all, I would class the remainder of the male population of the metropolis under the comprehensive head of Radicals. Among those who have no political opinions whatever, are the great body of the labouring Irish. I should think there are at least 50,000 Irishmen in London not in the way of reading

newspapers; for this good reason—that they cannot. The subject of politics is, therefore, to such persons, necessarily unknown and unthought of. There are, perhaps, 40,000 or 50,000 English labouring men, including cabmen, hackney-coachmen, draymen, and persons pursuing other such humble callings, who have never troubled their heads about politics; making altogether about 100,000 grown-up men in London who have no political opinions at all. But after this deduction has been made, in addition to the deductions for Tories and Whigs, the number of Radicals in the metropolis will be found sufficiently formidable. Making due allowances for women and children, who, of course, are always included in any statement of the supposed population of London, I should think the number of Radicals in the metropolis—of genuine intelligent Radicals—is not under 300,000; and I am confident that, if at a time of great political excitement the leaders of the party were to make it known to them, that the only test which could be admitted of

their devotion to their principles, would be their signing a certain Radical petition or other document, that number of signatures, with the requisite canvassing, would be adhibited to it in the course of eight days. It is only a few years, since upwards of 100,000 individuals, journeymen only in particular trades, enrolled their names as members of a union, which, however it may have been attempted to be concealed, was, beyond all question, a political union. The number of Radicals, however, possessing the elective franchise, is but limited. It is in the aggregate less than that of either the Whigs or Tories, though in some districts, the Finsbury district for example, it is greater. Hence the Radicals are unable, with one or two exceptions, to return to Parliament men who will "go the whole hog." Were we, however, to have universal suffrage, or were the suffrage to be much more extended than it now is, the metropolitan representatives would be, to a man, thoroughgoing Radicals. Sir Samuel Whalley thinks he goes "far and fast enough;" in the supposed

contingency he would find himself miserably mistaken. He and Mr. Bulwer would assuredly be displaced by Messrs. Murphy and Savage. In the other districts the present members would be also obliged to give way to regular levellers—men who would scatter the Constitution to the winds of heaven, and whose only law, as in the case of the French Revolution, would be their own capricious and despotic will. The usual process of making or administering the laws would be infinitely too slow for them; they would make and administer them with the rapidity of steam.

The Radicals are divided into various sections. There are the moderate Radicals, the ultra Radicals, and the Destructives. Among the first class there are a great many men of superior intelligence, great talent, and undoubted integrity of character, both in their public and private capacities. Among the ultra Radicals, there are also many honest men. The late Major Cartwright was one instance, and I look on the present Mr. Murphy as another. There

are also, perhaps, a few well-meaning, though mistaken, persons among the Destructives; but they are nearly as rare as black swans. How many of them, were they applying for situations requiring integrity and trustworthiness, could have, as the servants of all-work who advertise for places in "The Times," say, "an undeniable character," from any honest person who knows them! He must be a poor arithmetician who could not count the number. The loudest brawlers for reform at Destructive meetings, are precisely the men who stand in most need of reform themselves. They talk big about repairing the Constitution — let them look at home; their own characters stand fully as much in need of tinkering as the Constitution. When the Constitution is damaged to as great an extent, things will indeed have come to a pretty pass, and the sooner we pack up and quit the country the better. What are the leading Destructive declaimers in the metropolis? He who would write their biography faithfully, would be doing a service to his country of much

greater magnitude than many of those services which have procured for the persons performing them, a corner in St. Paul's. They are, almost to a man, individuals who have proved themselves the worst members of society. Ask their wives, or grown-up children, what they are; let their servants speak to their character; get the opinion of those who have had any dealings with them; or, best of all, hear, when they fall out among themselves, what they say of each other. "Set a thief," says the proverb, "to catch a thief." On the same principle, set a rogue to describe a rogue. "He best can paint it who has felt it most." I have had occasion to see many a split between the most noted rogues of the Destructive school. And what a picture on such occasions has the one drawn of the other! I had hoped too well of human nature to allow me to suppose there could be so much blackness and baseness in its composition, as they have ascribed to each other. In the borough of Marylebone, within a few yards of the house in which I then resided, two parties of Destructives

who chanced to have "a regular split," held a meeting on parish matters a short time since. There happened to be two public-houses directly opposite each other, and each party engaged one for the purpose of annoying the other. I sat at the window upwards of three hours enjoying the scene; and a richer one was never perhaps witnessed. The portraitures the leaders drew of each other, were taken partly by means of an oratorical pencil, and partly by means of a symbolical one. The parties made a distinction between each other, by the one adopting the name of the Yellows, and the other that of the Blues. Timothy Tagrag was the hero and leader of the Yellows, and Richard Ragamuffin* was the self-elected champion of the Blues. Timothy, amidst the cheers of his own party and the groans of the "adverse faction," as he called them, commenced the day's proceedings by the most virulent abuse of Ragamuffin. "Gentlemen," said Mr. Tagrag, looking at his own party, the Blues,

* These were the names by which the opposing leaders called each other.

or the "crew" as they were designated by the Yellows, "Gentlemen, you see opposite you one of the most unprincipled of men. Ragamuffin is guilty of every crime under heaven. He is a tyrant to his wife; not content with allowing her and his children to starve while he is indulging in his cups, and in something worse, he behaves like a brute to her on his return home, which is never before two or three o'clock in the morning. He is always drunk when he comes home, and his usual practice is, the moment he gets into his wife's bed-room, to beat her in the most furious manner. [Groans from Timothy's party, and "It's all a —" from the other.] It was only last year he paid his creditors three-farthings in the pound. No servant could ever remain longer than two days in the house with such a person. He is worse than a monster; he delights in the misery of his fellow-creatures. He would drink his glass of gin-and-water with peculiar zest, though he saw all London in a flame. [Renewed groans from the Yellows, mingled with exclamations of "You know, Dick, you're the

greatest —— in Marylebone," from the Blues.] Gentlemen, he never had a friend on earth whom he did not betray. He would sell his country for a quartern of gin. [Laughter and cheers from the Yellows, with groans from the Blues.] I defy any one to name a vice of which this person is not guilty: if any of you can invent a new one, he will be the first to commit it. I would earnestly caution those who have wives and daughters, never on any account to suffer him to cross their threshold. Were an action of damages to be brought against him for all his crimes of a certain kind, every big wig in the metropolis would have a case for himself. The instances in which he has seduced innocent unsuspecting girls, are innumerable. Such, gentlemen, is the character of the person who has the consummate effrontery to oppose us on this occasion; but the animal has no shame; if he had the smallest particle, he would never have the audacity, covered as he knows himself to be with crimes of the deepest dye, to hold up his face in society, much less aspire at the direc-

tion of the affairs of this parish. What the end of such a person will be, it needs not the gift of prophecy to foretell. Gentlemen, you see—[here a dead kitten, projected from the opposite side, interrupted the speaker by alighting on his mouth,]—Gentlemen, I was about to say, when thus rudely interrupted by one of the Ragamuffins over the way, that any one with half an eye may see this fellow's destiny written on his forehead. [Here one of Tagrag's party hoisted out at one of the windows a miniature gallows, with an effigy of Ragamuffin suspended from it.] Yes, gentlemen," continued Tagrag, "you are well aware—[here the speaker looked earnestly at the effigy]—of what the end of this monster will be, without my telling you."* [Loud cheers from the Tagragians, and groans and hisses from the Ragamuffins.]

It now became Ragamuffin's turn to address

* As this may appear to persons unacquainted with the parties to smack of caricature, it may be right to say that the Destructives in question actually used much coarser language towards each other, than I can with propriety transfer to my pages.

the meeting. He was greeted on rising with rapturous applause by his own party, and assailed with tremendous hisses by the other. "Gentlemen," said he—meaning his own party of course—"Gentlemen, this fellow, in the charges, the unfounded charges—[Loud laughter and cries of 'Oh! Oh!' from the Tagragians]—he has brought against me, has sketched his own character to a hair. He himself is the *great* original of his picture. His own conscience tells him he is guilty of everything of which he has accused me. Gentlemen, I beg your pardon for speaking of his conscience; the man never had a conscience. No man possessing anything in the shape of a conscience, could ever have contemplated, much less committed, the enormities of which the person, who has dared to insult you by opening his polluted mouth in your presence, is guilty. [Loud cheers from the Blues, with tremendous groans from the Yellows.] Will the man answer me this question? Did he not say, in Mr. Savage's tap-room, one day last week, when he and Dr. Wade

were gulping a pot of heavy wet, that if he had the management of the poor, he would take the shine out of them by keeping them on starvation allowance? [The groans from the Ragamuffins were here deafening, and even the Tagragians looked unutterable things at each other, having themselves the prospect of the workhouse before them. ' It's all a —,' shouted Mr. Tagrag.] He says, gentlemen, it's all a —. That's very easy said, and it's just such language as might be expected from him; but will anybody believe him? [Loud cries of 'No, no,' from the Ragamuffins.] Gentlemen, you see before you, in the opposite window, the man who swindled poor Widow Brewer, and her five small children, out of the last six-pence they possessed. You see a man who, like the tyrant of old, in regard to the people of Rome, could wish that you had only one neck among you, that he might, by breaking that neck, extinguish you at once. There has been a manifest mistake with respect to the age and country which brought the fellow into existence. It is clear that Fate intended him to have

been a countryman, a contemporary, and companion of Robespierre, and the other bloodthirsty monsters of the French Revolution. [Loud cheers from the Ragamuffins, answered by vehement hisses from the Tagragians.] He has his good fortune, and not his merits, gentlemen, to thank, that he has not already stood on a certain eminence off Ludgate-hill, with a halter round his neck. Ask him, gentlemen, whether he knows any one who gave his wife a blue eye last week, and nearly broke his eldest daughter's leg with a chair, because she interposed to prevent her father striking her mother. [Loud cries of 'Shame, shame!' from the Ragamuffins, and a dead silence on the part of the Tagragians.] Why, will you believe it, gentlemen, this person has been through the Insolvent Debtor's Court five times within the last twelve years? Ask him what he has done with the short weights with which, until detected, he was in the habit of cheating his customers when purchasing his coals? [Mr. Tagrag was, at the period I refer to, though not now, a potato mer-

chant.] Ask him"—[Here a rotten potato from the opposite side hit the speaker such a hard whack on the forehead, as made the remainder of the sentence, like Macbeth's 'Amen,' stick in his throat.] After a short pause he resumed, —"That rotten potato, gentlemen, is an appropriate emblem of himself—his soul is rotten—his body is rotten—he is rotten all over, as those who now support him will discover ere long. [Cries from the Ragamuffins of 'That they will.'] I was about, when brutally interrupted by one of the blackguard gang on the opposite side, to request you to ask the man who has the reckless impudence to oppose us this day, what he did with the forty odd pounds, which he collected six months ago from the parishioners, under the pretext that it was to defray the expenses incurred in endeavouring to defeat a Tory stratagem, got up by that party against the interests of the rate-payers. Gentlemen, there is no use in mincing matters with a person whose soul is as black as the coals, or rather the slates, he sells. I therefore charge him before

you all, with pocketing every farthing of that sum. [Most Stentorian groans from the Ragamuffins.] It was no later than last Wednesday that this brazen-faced fellow was found, at one o'clock in the morning, rolling in the mud opposite the door of a well-known house, in a state of the most beastly intoxication, and presenting the appearance of a person who had been wallowing for hours in the dubs. Had he lain there one moment longer he would have been run over, and had his body smashed to pieces by one of the large carts of Whitbread & Co. [A voice from the Ragamuffin party, 'What a pity he escaped!'] Why, certainly, gentlemen, the world would have been at no loss, though the brewer's cart had let his soul out of him, and this parish would have had eternal cause of rejoicing; but I should have been sorry, nevertheless, had the fellow made his exit in that way. I fancy I hear you ask me why? Why, for this good reason—that I hope to have the happiness of seeing a well-known public character close his career, by causing his donkey heels to dangle

in the air. [Thunders of applause from the Ragamuffins, with tremendous groans from the Tagragians.] Gentlemen, the character of this person is so bad, that no one ought to approach within a dozen yards of him; he is a libel on our species. Not only does he commit crimes which would make other men bury themselves in the earth, but he openly boasts of them. He glories, gentlemen, in the most frightful immoralities of which a human being can be guilty; immoralities, the mere mention of which would cause a thrill of horror in every bosom now present; and yet this person can have the surpassing effrontery to ascend the hustings at public meetings, and prate and brawl about virtue! Yes, gentlemen, will you believe it?—about *his* virtue! Should he succeed in—[Here a loud shout of laughter from the Tagragians drowned the remainder of the sentence. It was caused by a large placard being exhibited at the moment from their window, with the words written on it, 'Four-pence in the pound, Rag,' which was the amount of the speaker's latest composition with

his creditors.] I was about to say, gentlemen, that if this man—[Here again the voice of the orator was completely lost, amidst a burst of laughter, mingled with three successive volleys of cheers, which proceeded from the opposite party. The cause of their merriment was the exhibition at the window of a board containing a quantity of cat's-meat, he being a butcher, and being often reproached with selling meat of so bad a quality, as to be little better than the cat's-meat which is called from door to door in the streets.] Gentlemen, what I was about to say is this—and with it I will close—that if this person and his creatures—['Vy don't you say *varmint* at once?' shouted a sturdy Ragamuffin.] Well, then, varman be it. If, I say, they succeed in their object this day, that will be the greatest calamity that ever befel this parish; but I am sure we shall defeat them." [Immense applause from the Ragamuffins, and loud groans from the Tagragians.]

The majority of the Destructives who figure, to use one of their own favourite phrases, at

'Tibbald's Road,' the Rotunda, &c., are, I do in sober seriousness think, the most reckless and unprincipled class of persons to be found in the metropolis. I could unfold tales, the truth of which I have no reason to doubt, respecting the conduct of some of them, which would startle anybody but their followers. With individuals, however, I have nothing to do. My observations apply to bodies of men. Let me not, even in speaking of the Destructives in the mass, employ an expression which would do any one, though it were but by implication, injustice. Those who mix much with the class of politicians of whom I am speaking, must, from the conduct of the great body of them, be forcibly reminded of Dr. Johnson's remark, "that the greatest rogues always seek refuge in patriotism."

My curiosity has often led me to attend Destructive meetings, where the leading demagogues were, on the Peachum and Lockit principle, agreed, at least ostensibly, among themselves. On such occasions, I have generally been amused with their lofty pretensions to

virtue. They talk of themselves as if they were deities, and engage that, if the government of the country were confided to them, they would at once make Great Britain the scene of a political and social millennium.

It is no less amusing to contrast their assumed importance at these meetings with their limited numbers and still more limited moral influence. The story of the three tailors of Tooley Street, who commenced their petition with "We the people of England," is known to every one. The same farce was exhibited every Tuesday evening in the winter of 1835, in a well-known political house in Marylebone. Some thirty or forty individuals weekly assembled there, to smoke a pipe, to drink their glass of gin-and-water, or pint of porter, and discuss the affairs of the state. They dignified themselves with the name of "The Great Radical Association of England," made their speeches, passed their resolutions, and, night after night, threatened to exterminate the House of Lords, and scatter the Commons in all directions, if they did not obey

their mandates, and pass those measures which they thought proper to recommend. Nothing could exceed the pompousness of their proceedings in so far as regarded the matter and manner of their speeches. Had a person been conducted blindfold into the "great hall" where the "Great Radical Association of England" was holding their meeting, and had no other means of information as to the real state of matters than what was afforded him through the medium of his ears, he would have thought there was something truly formidable in the composition and proceedings of such an assemblage. He would have heard them making and re-making constitutions and ministries "in less than no time," as one of themselves once observed. Had he been suddenly restored to the privilege of sight, the illusion, to be sure, would have been at once dispelled. He would have seen, perhaps, in the chair, a journeyman carpenter, whose beard had been guiltless of any intercourse with a razor for eight days—whose wardrobe had more holes than whole cloth in it—and whose frontispiece presented the

appearance of that of a chimney-sweep after the first water on May-day. On the platform, on the right hand of the chairman, was invariably to be seen a little pot-bellied man, called Jim Rogers, smoking a pipe and cheering the speaker. This four-feet-six of patriotic mortality was altogether an unique character. He was never to be seen without his porter before him, a "swig" of which he took at regular intervals of five minutes each, always preceding the draught by loud cries of "Hear, hear, hear!" The last sound, indeed, invariably died away in the utensil as he put it to his mouth; and as he withdrew it again to insert his pipe in its place, his countenance gleamed with a smile of so peculiar a nature that I am sure the most skilful physiognomist would be puzzled to know in what classification to place it. If I have succeeded in realising to myself the particular kind of smile which Milton had in his mind's eye when he spoke of the "ghastly smile" of his fallen angel, I should say that that of Jim Rogers' was not of the same genus. I incline rather to the opinion that it ap-

proximated nearer to the smile or grin, whichever you like to call it, of the celebrated cobbler mentioned by Addison in one of his 'Spectators.' It is worthy of remark that Jim never spoke himself; he was too much occupied with his pipe and porter, and the cheering of the other orators, to play the Demosthenes in his own person. You never missed our little patriot from his post; he was the first in the "great hall," and the last to leave it. As he used to say himself, no man should ever find him "a traatir" to his country. His compatriots were not so regular in their attendance. Sometimes you saw one set of orators on the platform, and at other times another. In the body of the room, the Destructive assemblage was of as motley a character as if all London had been polled for the purpose of making it so. Each person was a character by himself. There were, however, three features common to them all—they all smoked their pipes, drank their porter or their gin-and-water, and, with the exception of the aforesaid Jim Rogers, played the orator. They all, too, concurred in lamenting the degeneracy of the

times, bewailed the lack of patriots, as proved by their thin attendance; and were most liberal in abusing the Whigs and Tories. The proceedings usually occupied about three hours. Before one hour had elapsed the "great hall" was "choke full" of smoke. The scene was one which would have done a poet's heart good. Nothing could be more poetical than the graceful way in which the volumes of smoke curled as they were whiffed, redolent of heavy wet, from each mouth, before losing themselves in the general mass,—especially in those cases in which two or three of the volumes affectionately entwined themselves in each other's embraces. A wag one night popped his head in at the door, and asked the patriot next to him what it was all about. The Destructive, in a gruff brutish tone, replied—"Vy it's jist about a-ending." "Then," said the other coughing loudly as if already half suffocated, "it looks as if it would all end in smoke." It is a fact which deserves to be mentioned to the credit of Jim Rogers, that none but himself seemed to pay the least attention to any speeches

but their own. To be sure, they liberally cheered the eloquence of their compatriots; but cheering a speech is quite compatible, in the case of the Destructives, with not hearing one word of it. Jim acted in this respect as a fugleman to the others, by giving, as I before stated, sundry hearty cheers immediately before burying his head in the pot of porter. The patriots in the body of the room were most exemplary in responding to the little hero's cheers; so that on the whole, no orator ever had any great reason to complain of the want of applause. The torrents of eloquence which each successive speaker poured out, never interrupted the business of the house. In fact, the "great hall" on such occasions only presented the spectacle of a tap-room on an enlarged scale. Mr. S———, to "keep up the concarn," as a bricklayer's hodman one night happily expressed himself, occasionally gave the "Great Radical Association of England" five minutes of his seditious oratory; but at other times, he and a couple of potboys had their hands sufficiently full in executing

the orders for "'baccy" and heavy wet. In giving these orders, the parties always spoke as loudly as did the demagogue for the time being. The effect was infinitely ludicrous. Take the following as an illustration. Dr. Wade was the orator:—"I say, gentlemen, that until the working classes are united among themselves they will never ["Boy, bring me a pint of porter with the chill taken off"] be able to do any thing ["I say, you little chap with the jacket, get me a pipe and 'baccy"] to redress their grievances. It is now four years—["I say, Mr. S———, I von't stand that any longer any how. It's a good quarter o' an hour since I ordered a glass o' gin-and-water, and I'se not got it yet."—"You'll get it presently."] It is now four years since the Reform Bill passed into a law, and none of you ["Bring me a match to light my pipe with—will you, boy?"] have reaped the slightest benefit—" [Mr. S———. "Did you pay for *your* porter, Jack Hogan?" "Voy to be sure I did. This here Bob Martin," pointing to a son of St. Crispin who sat beside him, "saw me fork out the

hapnies. Didn't you, Bob?" "Yes, I'll take my oath on't, Jack."] Not one of you, I say, gentlemen, have yet derived the slightest benefit from the Reform Bill, and until ["Take a hearty swig of this heavy, Harry, my boy"] associations of this kind are established in all parts of the country, you never can ["Boy, a pint of porter of the right sort; none of your swipes now"] raise yourself to that station in society which you are entitled to occupy. Gentlemen, we owe whatever liberty we possess to a body of men who roamed eight hundred years ago amidst the forests of Germany: let us only be ["I say, Ned, old chap, shall we have another go of gin-and-water,"] united and energetic, and we will complete what our German ancestors ["Mr. S ——, have you got no spit-boxes?"] so gloriously began. I am sure, gentlemen, I need not remind you, in pressing on you the advantages of union, of the well-known story of ["Bring me a pint of half-and-half, you boy with the apron round your middle"] the man and the bundle of sticks. I am well aware of what

might be done by"—[Here the worthy Doctor was interrupted by Jim Rogers puffing a quantity of smoke down his throat while Jim was lighting his pipe afresh at a candle, which stood on a table just before the Doctor's face. The effect of the four-feet-six patriot interposing his head and shoulders between the reverend orator and the candle, was that of a temporary total eclipse of the jolly-looking cabbage-coloured physiognomy of the latter, and caused a burst of laughter from the Destructive assemblage. After the cessation of a violent fit of coughing, caused by the dense volume of smoke which Jim had injected into his mouth, the Doctor good-naturedly resumed]—"I am well aware, I was going to say, gentlemen, of what might be done by physical force, but I, as a minister of the gospel of peace, cannot recommend you to have recourse to such extreme measures. I would say ["Mr. S———, bring me a crust of bread and cheese"] exert yourselves peacefully but spiritedly;" ["Another glass of brandy-and-water, Tom, my boy;"] do this and ["I'm blowed if I don't

have another pint of porter. Fill this pot again, Mr. S———, and here's your blunt,"] do this, I say, and you are sure eventually to succeed. Allow me to say, gentlemen, before I sit down, that perhaps I have gone, in the first part of my speech, a little too far. [A gruff voice from a stranger looking in at the door, "I think you have a deuced deal, Doctor; so good night," followed by cries of "No, no!"] If, gentlemen, I have in the excitement of the moment —[Here the worthy divine wiped the perspiration off his brow, and gave two or three gentle coughs]—if I have said any thing unbecoming, I am sure you will ascribe it all to my zeal in your cause." The rev. gentleman sat down amidst tumultuous cheers, in which the stentorian lungs of "the people" were ably aided by the application of Mr. S———'s pots to the forms on which the Destructives sat. In the midst of the uproarious applause, a recent importation from Tipperary, with his coat off and his breast open, just as if newly returned from paving the streets, advanced to the platform, with a pot in his hand, foaming

with Barclay and Perkins's entire, and looking the orator with an approving smile full in the face, sung out, "Bravo, Docther; here's your jolly good health! Isn't it yourself, Docther, will be afther taking a drop of it to wet your throat with?" So saying, the Emeralder handed "the pewter" and its contents to the Radical Divine, who took a hearty draught of the latter.

I may here be allowed to remark, that considered only as a man of the world, Mr. S—— deserves every credit for the tact he displayed in establishing and managing to continue for six months, the "Great Radical Association of England;" for under the pretext of discussing the affairs of the state, he decoyed men into the "great hall" of his house to quaff his porter and spirits. Members of the association were but another name for customers of Mr. S——, and very good customers they proved. The quantity of heavy wet, and gin and brandy mixed with water, to say nothing of the "'baccy" which they consumed, was immense. Finding

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the thing answer so admirably, he, with infinite tact, contrived to get up another concern, under the pretext of establishing a new religion on the Sunday forenoon,—Sunday being a leisure day. There was singular judgment, too, in the fixing of the hour, eleven o'clock; for he knew full well that at that early hour the working classes could not have got rid of their week's wages; whereas, had he appointed the evening for the meeting, the chances were that either the "disciples" would have expended all their money in the course of the day, or have gone and got drunk elsewhere with the little that remained. The new religion affair was, however, soon put an end to by the magistrates of Marylebone. The new system was in religion what ultra Radicalism is in politics, namely, a levelling of all distinctions in morals, and everybody doing as they liked. It might with great propriety have been called a Radical religion. The grand test of discipleship was, the liberal consumption of Mr. S——'s heavy wet. To vituperate Christianity and talk ribaldry, were

additional recommendations. But this is a digression.

From all I have seen and known of the Destructive character, I should say decidedly that it never appears to half the advantage it does at a public dinner. I never miss an opportunity, if I can help it, of being present at Destructive feeds. The last one at which I was present was the Great Marylebone Festival—for so it was styled—of the 4th of August. It came off on a large cricket-ground at St. John's Wood. It was altogether a rich concern. About 4000 persons were present, 1500 of whom were ladies; at least, they were by courtesy so called. The feeders were all inclosed in a tent erected for the purpose, while a sort of gallery was constructed at the right hand side of the tent, for the accommodation of the ladies. On the left hand side was a small booth, which had been fitted up for the reception of the musicians; while immediately before them was a platform extending from one side of the tent to the other, for the speakers. Immediately

close to the fiddlers was planted a range of 'great guns,' the property of the "Ancient and Honourable Lumber Troop," and which, in the spirit of genuine patriotism, had been "kindly lent for the occasion." The arrival of any noted Destructive was duly announced by a discharge of Lumber Troop artillery. The same mark of distinction greeted any thoroughly levelling toast; and constituted no unsuitable accompaniment to the uproarious applause with which such toasts were received. The dinner was advertised to take place at three o'clock; but as public dinners in the metropolis are understood not to commence for an hour after the time mentioned, many persons who, like myself, had gone from curiosity, did not reach the ground for half an hour after. The consequence was we were too late. The Destructives were all hard at work. The fact was, that as early as three o'clock some of the more knowing ones had taken care to inform themselves of the state of the supplies, and learning there was not enough for one fourth of those who had pur-

chased tickets, they determined to take care of themselves, and "ordered dinner to be laid on the table directly." This was done the more easily and expeditiously as the dinner was a cold one. I reached the ground in the very midst of the repast; and what a scene! It was a regular eating match against time. You would have staked your existence that the majority of the feeders had not had a dinner for the previous eight days. To many, a dinner was an epoch in their existence. The voracity of their appetites, and the capacity of their stomachs, were undeniable. I will venture to say, there were some of them who need not in these respects shrink from a competition with the giraffe in the adjoining Zoological Gardens. The various eatables, consisting of bacon, pork, mutton, beef, with about half-a-dozen fowls to 2500 persons, vanished in an incredible short time. Had they, indeed, by some necromantic process, quitted the table and darted off, on the skyrocket principle, up into the air, to appease the appetites of the parties who were then float-

ing a mile and a half in two balloons,* above our heads, they could scarcely have disappeared more suddenly. One skin-and-bone looking little fellow, with a most unearthly visage, and his hair in a state of the most perfect uproar, swallowed half-a-dozen slices of ham, as if they had been so many Morison's pills. Dr. Wade sat directly opposite "stomaching" a quantity of some suspicious looking article, which was dignified with the name of veal, at the rate of two ounces per every ten seconds. When done, he adjusted his circular shirt-collar, and emptied a pint of heavy wet at a draught. While thus devouring everything set before them with such voracity of appetite, I could not help thinking with myself, that in the true spirit of cannibalism they would have eaten each other, and smacked their lips after the repast, had they been regularly "served up." The whole affair was a trial, not only of the masticating capabilities of the parties, but a

* Two balloons, with four individuals in them, chanced at this time to make their appearance.

trial of strength. For some of the solids there was a regular struggle. In the contest for one of the half dozen fowls, which took place between the rival editors of two of the then unstamped papers, the poor animal was torn limb from limb, each carrying away his half in triumph. The principal contributor to the "Poor Man's Guardian" waylaid one of the waiters before he got the length of the table, and seizing the piece of bacon he was carrying, sat down with his back to the table, and demolished the morsel with all due expedition. Mr. Douglas, the St. Pancras vestryman, who enjoys a joke as much as any man I know, snatched a large slice of mutton from before a little Marylebone Radical, called Ned Monaghan, and devoured it amidst the bitter imprecations of the latter. One of Sir Samuel Whalley's most zealous supporters, a stout pot-bellied little fellow, with a countenance indicative of infinite self-complacency, caught hold of a fragment of a round of beef in its transit from Mr. Henry Wilson, a "Marybone" vestryman, to Mr. Savage, and put-

ting it down on his knees beneath the table, dispatched it in excellent style. A muscular Irishman, who sat next to him, with a nose of so peculiar a conformation as to defy description, picked up a small pudding-dish the moment the waiter deposited it on the table, and appropriated its contents to his own use, before any of his starving companions had time to ask for a morsel of the rarity. Directly opposite sat another ultra of colossal proportions, and who I afterwards understood to be one of Mr. Attwood's "Brummagem men," leaning over another pudding dish, which he surrounded with his left arm, to keep the otherwise incursive paws of friends at a distance; while with his right hand, partly assisted by a spoon, he raised the delicacy to his mouth and slobbered it, as he himself afterwards expressed it, "in a crack." A short-built Destructive just arrived from Manchester, whose appetite, judging from the efforts, though they were in vain, which he made to lay his clutches on something, must have been made voracious by his journey,

observed, with a most rueful countenance, and in most pitiable accents, "Vy, I'll be blowed if this aint vorse than the starwation allowance of the vorkus." His brother patriot, an Irishman, to whom the remark was addressed, assented. "By the powers," said he, "and that same's a true word that you have been after spaking: there's not even a prattie to be had for love or money—bad luck to them all!"

Never, indeed, did I see a more impressive exemplification of the principle, "Every one for himself." I wished with all my heart that Wordsworth the poet had been present. He would, in that case, have seen such a forcible illustration as I am sure he could never have expected to witness, of his own well known lines—

> "That they would take who have the power,
> And they would keep who can."

Forks and knives were but scantily provided. However, they were not much wanted. Mr. Fergus O'Connor, Mr. H——, who threatens, under certain circumstances, to break the backs

of the Marylebone Vestry reporters with a stick, Mr. Murphy, and some forty or fifty of the genteeler class of Radicals, used these implements; but there were scores whom it did not suit to have anything to do with them: they would only have proved impediments to expeditious eating,—the great point to be gained. Others, and these formed a very considerable portion of those present, dispensed with knives and forks for a reason which even a Destructive must allow to be a valid one; they had no use for them—they had nothing to eat. It is impossible to describe the woe-begone countenances of those who were in this predicament. Some of them worked themselves into a furious passion. One man, an undertaker, who seemed himself a very fit subject for some of his trusty brethren of the trade doing for him what he, like the grave-digger in Hamlet, had done for thousands, strongly remonstrated with the waiter.

"Vaiter, why don't you bring us something to eat?"

"It's all on the table, sir," said the waiter,

stretching out his arm to withdraw an empty pudding-dish.

"And it's all off the table, too," said the coffin-maker, indignantly.

"That's not my fault," observed John; and he scudded away with his arms full of empty dishes, to some unknown region where they were to be deposited.

"Why don't you complain to one of the stewards," said Dr. Wade, who, in the scramble had, as already mentioned, come off very successfully. The Rev. Gentleman winked at Mr. Murphy, in a way which evidently showed that he was enjoying a joke at the poor hungry undertaker's expense.

"Mr. Savage," said the latter—Mr. Savage was one of the stewards—"here's a pretty go of it; nothing to eat; no, not a morsel. Better be at home on Yarmouth bloaters than this."

"Whose fault's that?" inquired Mr. Savage, with inimitable *sang froid*. Mr. Savage whispered across the table to Mr. Fergus O'Connor,

"I hope the speeches to night will be of the right Radical sort."

"It's the vaiter's fault, I suppose," said the man of coffins. Poor fellow, he knew no better!

"Well then," observed Mr. Savage, "you have the remedy in your own hands; take his number."

"But he's gone."

"Then why don't you go after him?"

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Savage, I won't submit to be treated in this 'ere vay; I must have some grub, or my four shillings back again."

"I wish he may get either," whispered Dr. Wade into my ear, with a smile of that peculiar character which I never saw any one give but himself.

"What excellent music!" observed Mr. Murphy to the "performer" of funerals, trying to soothe him down a little.

"What's music to a hungry stomach?" said

the other, lowering his brow. "Can I dine on music?"

"Never mind," said a sturdy unwashed personage, the very image of Thistlewood of Cato-street notoriety, his head half buried in his breast; "never mind, my friend, you are at no loss any how. I would not give a farden for the whole kit of vat vas on the table; it vas no better than ——"

"It's all very vell for you to say so, after you have 'had a belly full of the vitals,'" interrupted the undertaker, his choler rising still higher and higher. "I say, Mr. Savage," he continued, "if I don't get something to eat, I'll be ——"

The remainder of the sentence was lost amidst a tremendous volley fired by the Lumber Troop artillery, in honour of the arrival of Mr. Wakley, who, from his experience of the amount of the supplies at previous Destructive meetings, had wisely taken the precaution of taking an early dinner before leaving the Lancet office.

"Are you all charged?" shouted the chairman, as soon as Mr. Wakley had seated himself.

The clatter of plates, the clinking of pots emptied of their heavy wet, and the Babel of tongues which, conjointly, had before drowned the music, and vied with the reports of the Lumber Troop cannon, ceased in a moment at the magic words. Every one's pewter utensil—that is, every one who had a groat in his pocket to procure the turbid liquid—was filled to the brim in an instant. "The People—the true source of all legitimate power," said the chairman, in a stentorian voice. (Drank with tremendous applause, which lasted a full minute, and all upstanding.) "The peepil," responded a vender of muddy coffee, price one penny per half pint. "The pee—," echoed the Mr. Jim Rogers already alluded to, withdrawing his head from a pot of "heavy" which he was gulping with remarkable energy; but the liquid still gurgling in his throat prevented his completing the sentence, and was within an ace of choking him, to the bargain. Mr. Buckingham, for the only time during the evening, relaxed the rigidity of his features, and condescended to

smile, as the loud cheer with which the toast was drank, died away on the air. To be sure, true to his "tee-total," or temperance society principles, he filled his glass with toast and water out of a large decanter, which lay the whole evening before him full of that very harmless beverage; but it was easy to perceive, without any superior skill in the science of Lavater, that he envied those who heartily partook of the foaming tankards of porter which he saw the waiters carrying in every direction around him. Mr. Roebuck rose amidst loud and general cries of "Mount a chair," "Can't see you," to propose the unstamped press. "He trusted the time would soon come, when the whole of the London press would be what Hetherington's Dispatch now was; [Mr. Hetherington lifted his hat;] for so long as the odious red stamp deformed the broad sheet, our newspapers would be the same vile, servile, vulgar publications which they now were. [Thundering cheers, re-echoed by the artillery of the Lumber Troop.] Mr. Lee, editor of "The Man," one of the

penny unstamped, leaped on the table, and, hat in hand, hurraed so vociferously, that it was apprehended he would alarm the wild beasts in the neighbouring Zoological Gardens. Sir Samuel Whalley proposed something, but from the uproarious state of the "gentlemen" present, no one could hear what it was. The only detached sentence I could catch was, that he was delighted to see "such a fair phalanx of bright eyes" before him. Sir Samuel all the while kept his optics immovably fixed on the countenances of some really beautiful girls who sat directly opposite, and once or twice put his fore-fingers on his mouth, as if to prevent the meeting being annoyed by a slight cough. Dr. Bowring, who in the early part of the meeting appeared "lost in thought," possibly, from endeavouring to resolve into general principles, some of the singularly diversified dialects he heard spoken, now became quite fidgetty, as if anxious to effect his escape from the infliction of sounds caused by everybody speaking and shouting at once. The noise, indeed, had by

this time become so intolerable, that Mr. Hume was obliged to give up an abstruse calculation as to the profits which the landlord who furnished the dinner would make by it. Here Mr. Douglas shouted out that some one had robbed him of his watch. "And some cove," said a dark looking, woolly-haired, unshaved patriot, sitting next to him, at the same time fumbling in his pocket, while the waiter was standing to receive the price of a pot of porter, "Some cove has taken all my browns." The consequence was, he was obliged to borrow a groat to pay for the beverage. Finding it worse than folly to make any further attempt at oratory that evening, Mr. Savage mounted the platform, and, waving the rod of office which, as one of the stewards, he had held in his hand all the evening,—he said, in a voice of a twenty-trumpet power,* that the ladies were now becoming impatient for the dance, and he was sure there was too much gallantry among the Radicals

* Mr. Savage's voice, even in common conversation, has a great deal of the shrillness of the trumpet in it.

of Marylebone to deny them, for one moment longer, that pleasure. The gentle hint was received with a round of applause, which threatened to tear in one moment the tent in tatters. The Radicals rose *en masse*, the forms and tables were removed instanter, and in a few seconds some dozens of both sexes were tripping the light fantastic toe. Mr. Hume and Mr. Buckingham then left the company without the formality of bidding any one, except Sir Samuel Whalley, good night. I thought I could not do better than follow their example.

Such is a fair specimen of a Destructive dinner. I have been present at others still more ludicrous; but I have preferred giving a sketch of the Marylebone one of August the 4th, both because it is the latest of any note, and because the principal performers are well-known "public characters."

Mungo Park mentions in his "Travels in the Interior of Africa," that the inhabitants are in the habit of referring back to the date of any particular circumstance, not by giving the

year of its occurrence, but by stating that it took place at or about the same time as some other well-known event. For example, he says, that circumstances which occurred in the course of his journey through the interior, will be afterwards referred to as having happened at the time of the White man's visit, without mentioning the year. It is precisely so with the Destructives. A dinner of any kind, or at any time, is, as before observed, an era in their lives: a public dinner is with them an epoch in the history of the country. Hence they always speak of other circumstances as having transpired in the year of some great Destructive dinner.

I have mentioned, in a previous part of this chapter, what I conceive to be the number of Radicals in the metropolis. It is right to state, however, that their number *apparently* undergoes a great variation according to circumstances. Radicalism is in its most palmy state when trade is dull, and when the working classes have consequently to resist the rebellion of the belly.

When they are fully employed, neither "Tibbald's Road," nor the Rotunda, nor Mr. S——'s "Great Hall," has any attractions to them. The demagogues who find agitation to be like the air they breathe, then change the burden of their lamentation from the sins of the Whigs and Tories, to the supineness of the people. In theory, however, the working classes are as great Radicals as ever, and when "times turn slack" again, will shout and brawl as vociferously, and make as great a fuss about universal suffrage, and the other principles which follow in its train, as before.

CHAPTER III.

LITERATURE.

London the emporium of literature—Works of fiction—Poetry — History — Statistics — Philosophy—Works on the subject of health—Biography and Autobiography—Voyages and Travels—Public taste for light reading—Divinity—Extent to which books sell—Cheap republications of standard works—Embellished works—Supposed number and circumstances of persons who live by their literary labours—The success of works not always dependent on their merits—The precariousness of the literary profession—Privations of Authors—The expedients resorted to by Authors to attract attention.

LONDON, as every one is aware, is the great emporium of trade, commerce, wealth, and fashion; it is still more so of literature. Thither authors flock from all parts of the country, even from its remotest points, to publish their works. Not only is it thought there is a want of respect-

ability in books which issue from the provincial press, but it is taken for granted—and in most cases justly—that they have not the same chances of success as if emanating from the metropolis. London has, undoubtedly, many advantages in this respect peculiar to itself. It is, for example, the only place which has a regular communication with all other parts of the country. It has, too, as the metropolis, a name which no other town can by possibility ever acquire. It not only now is, but ever must continue, the great depôt of literary works; the place whence, wherever they may be written, they must emanate. In speaking, therefore, of the literature of the metropolis, I may be considered as speaking, in a great measure, of the literature of Great Britain generally.

About twenty years ago, the literary tide set in in favour of fiction. The extraordinary success of the Waverley Novels stimulated a host of writers to apply themselves to works of a similar class. If those who, after Sir Walter Scott, were the earliest in this literary field, did not acquire the

same fame, or derive the same pecuniary advantage as the Magician of the North, they were sufficiently successful to encourage them to make new efforts, and to induce others to follow their example. Hence, about ten or twelve years since, when the mania for works of fiction was at its height, it was calculated that from two to three hundred appeared in the course of a year. All of them of any note could boast a sale of from 750 to 1,000: decidedly good ones often reached a sale of from 1,500 to 2,000 copies. A striking change has since come over the spirit of this class of literature. The authors, whose works of fiction a dozen years since commanded a sale of from 1,500 to 2,000 copies, cannot now command a sale of 500. I could mention many instances in confirmation of this, but it would be equally invidious to authors and publishers. I may state in general terms, that on one day, about six months ago, four novels, two of them by authors of great celebrity in the high and palmy days of works of fiction, were published by different houses, and that the sale

of neither of the works exceeded 350 copies; that of three out of the four was under that number. Publishers have now come to the conclusion—a conclusion forced on them by painful experience—that the days of this class of works are past for ever. Authors may continue to write, but publishers will not publish, except in comparatively few cases, even though the copyright were offered them for nothing. If authors *will* write novels, they must publish them at their own risk. This, indeed, has been the case, though the public are not aware of the fact, in many instances of late years, as I shall have occasion afterwards to show at some length. The truth is, that, with the exception of the works of fifteen or twenty authors, no individual ever now dreams of purchasing a novel for his own reading. The only copies bought are for the circulating libraries.

Poetry is at a still greater discount in the literary market than novels. Offer a publisher a volume of poetry, and he sickens at the very sight. He looks upon you much in the same

way as if he had detected you in the act of attempting to pick his pocket. And assuredly not without reason; for in various cases, within the last three or four years, have publishers smarted most severely by speculating in the commodity of poetry; and this, too, while the quality of the article has been admitted on all hands to be very superior. A short time since, a popular poet sold the copyright of a poem for 100*l.* to a publisher at the West End. It was really a beautiful composition, and was most liberally praised in reviews of from ten to twenty pages, in "Blackwood's Magazine," and the other leading periodicals; and yet the sale did not much exceed 50 copies. Another poem of a humorous kind, extending to nearly three hundred pages, which was very clever, and displayed great depth and variety of erudition, was published about twenty months ago. It was to the author the labour of years; and what does the reader suppose was the extent of the sale? Just eighteen copies. To such an extent, indeed, has poetry become a drug in the market, that I do not believe the names

of Campbell, or Rogers, or Wordsworth, would insure a sale of more than a few hundred copies, of any poetical work they could at present produce.

It is the same with regard to re-publications of the works of the standard poets of a past age. Not long since, an enterprising publisher got up one of the cheapest and most beautiful editions I have ever witnessed, of the works of the most popular poet of the last century; and in order that every justice might be done the work, in bringing its claims before the public, he spent upwards of 500*l.* in advertising it. He expected a sale of 5,000 copies, and accordingly printed that number: he never sold 500. In another case, a beautiful reprint was made of the works of the most popular poet of Scotland in the seventeenth century; the poet's name was in everybody's mouth, but his works had for many years been scarce. In these circumstances the publisher thought a cheap and elegant edition of those works, with a carefully written memoir, and a critical notice of the poets of the

same period, would be a hit. The event proved how erroneous were his calculations. The work, in one handsome volume, made its appearance; it was cordially commended, and deservedly so, by the majority of the periodicals; but the sale never reached 30 copies.

Of late years little in the shape of history has been attempted. Where the subject has been interesting, and the execution respectable, such works have met with a fair sale. The historical works which have appeared in Dr. Lardner's "Cyclopædia," have all been successful; but that is not a fair index of the demand for historical literature, as it is impossible to distinguish between those cases in which such works have sold on their own account, and those in which they have been purchased, merely because they formed a part of a connected series of volumes on literature in general.

Statistical works on subjects of general importance are in fair demand at present. The majority of those which have of late been published by Mr. Knight, have been of this class,

and they have, for the most part, been very successful. Mr. Babbage's "Economy of Manufactures," Dr. Lardner's "Steam Engine," Maculloch's "Commercial Dictionary," Baine's "History of the Cotton Manufacture," &c. have severally had an extensive sale.

Philosophy is in bad repute at the present moment, among the reading public. Supposing Lockes and Boyles were to arise in dozens, they would not just now succeed in getting either themselves or their works into notice. Within the last few years several very able and profound works on the subject of mental philosophy have appeared, but the most successful of them have not reached a sale of 200 copies.

Works bearing on the subject of health, when drawn up in a popular form, are now very generally read. Dr. James Clark's admirable "Treatise on Consumption," has attracted more attention beyond the pale of the profession, than any similar work ever published. This fact must have been observed by every one in the habit of reading the magazines and newspapers; for

almost every newspaper and literary periodical of any note, has most earnestly recommended it to the attention of the public.

Biography and autobiography are in considerable request, where the subjects are well known, and the books are well written. Barry Cornwall's "Life of Kean," and Campbell's "Life of Mrs. Siddons," have each been tolerably successful. "The Life of Salt," the British Consul at Cairo, and "The Life of Sir Thomas Picton," have been still more so. The "Life of Lord Exmouth," by Mr. Osler, published two years ago, has sold to the extent of 1,500 copies. Galt's "Autobiography," though the price was 28*s.* the two volumes, and Sir Egerton Brydges' "Autobiography," published at the same price, severally reached a sale of about 700 copies.

Books of voyages and travels, especially the latter, when the part of the world visited excites interest, and where the writer has displayed judgment and tact in the use of the materials provided for him, are read with avidity. Quin's "Voyage down the Danube" has sold to the

extent of 1,200 or 1,400 copies. Holman's "Voyage Round the World," though in four large volumes, has met with a sale of 600 or 700 copies. The Voyages of Captain Ross and of Captain Back to the Arctic Seas, have met with an extensive sale. The number of copies sold of the first exceeds 2,000; that of the second about 1,000, though both were expensive works. Mr. Bentley's edition of "Lamartine's Pilgrimage to the Holy Land," has met with a large sale; so have most of the late works on the same subject. Stuart's "Three Years' Residence in America," has been very successful. It has reached a third edition, making a sale of upwards of 1,500 copies. Macfarlane's "Travels in the East," has sold nearly to the same extent. Drs. Reed and Mathison's "Travels in America," published in 1835, sold to the extent of 1,000 in seven or eight months, though an expensive work in two volumes; and Drs. Cox and Hoby's "Visit to the American Baptist Churches," published in March or April last year, went through the first edition in about

three months. The sale of Mr. Barrow's "Tour round Ireland," performed in the autumn of last year, has met with great success, upwards of 800 copies having been sold of it in less than six months after the time of publication.

Works of a light and sketchy kind are among those most generally read in the present day. It is the admirable wit and humour of Captain Marryat's sketches of character, more than anything else, that render his works so popular. It was the same qualities that brought Theodore Hook's late novel of "Gilbert Gurney" to a second edition in about six months, though few other novels have reached a second edition for the last twelve months. To the same cause, also, is "Boz" to attribute the sale of 1,500 copies of his two volumes of "Sketches of Every-day Scenes, and Every-day People."*

Divinity in most cases is an unsaleable commodity in the bibliopolic market. Sermons are

* Since this was written, the work has reached a still greater sale.

especially so. Perhaps not one theological work out of twenty or thirty, pays its expenses. The works of distinguished divines, however, still command a remunerating sale. So great is the popularity of the works of the late Rev. Robert Hall, that one of the houses for the publication of religious books, gave 4,000*l.* for the copyright, in six volumes—including the memoir of the author's life, by Dr. Olinthus Gregory. The copyright of the works of the late Rev. C. Simeon, of Cambridge, in twenty volumes, was also recently purchased by Holdsworth and Ball, if I mistake not, for 5,000*l.* The Rev. Alexander Fletcher's "Family Devotion," though the price is twenty-four shillings, has had an extensive sale. Upwards of 2,000 copies were disposed of it in a very short time. Nor is its great success to be wondered at; for if anything could be more happy than the plan of the work, it is the way in which it is executed.

The current of public taste seems at present to run principally in the direction of works which have a personal relation; no matter whe-

ther to bodies of men, or to persons in their individual capacities.* The caricatures and personalities with which Mrs. Trollope's "America and the Americans" abound, were the great secret of its success. The same may be said of her late work on "Paris and the Parisians." Anything in the shape of scandal or abuse, is sure to be read with avidity; so also are those works which, though there be nothing ill-natured or vituperative in them, make us acquainted with the habits and peculiarities of persons who fill a large space in the public eye, provided the works be cleverly written. It was Mr. Willis's disclosures of this kind, that proved the passport to his "Pencillings by the Way" to a sale of 1,500 copies in the space of twelve months.

The number of books published last year in London, in the various departments of science

* "Almack's" was an instance of this. It was the freedom with which it dealt with well-known personages, though under fictitious names, that procured it a sale of upwards of 2,000 copies Prince Puckler's "Tour in England," a few years since, owed its success to the same cause.

and literature, were, as nearly as can be ascertained; fifteen hundred.

It is calculated that out of every fifteen books published, taking them on the average, not more than one pays its own expenses. "The Edinburgh Review" proved to demonstration, some years ago, that only one out of every fifty pamphlets which make their appearance, pay the expenses of paper, print, stitching, and advertising. On this subject I shall have something more to say, when I come to the chapter on "Authors and Publishers."

Only one book, on an average, out of about 200, reaches a second edition. Out of 500 books, not more than one gets to a third edition; and out of 1,000 only one has the good fortune to reach a fourth edition.

There are various causes which have of late operated against the sale of books, altogether irrespective of their merits. Their very number is one of these. It is impossible the demand could ever equal the supply, unless we were a nation of philosophers, and had nothing else to

do than to read. Horace said, in his day, that verse was the trade of every living wight. What would he say were he to revisit the world in 1837, and see the host of authors, both in verse and prose, which at present crowd the temple of Parnassus? You now meet with an author in every fifteenth or twentieth person you chance to encounter in the daily intercourse of life. Cobbett used to say, that if a string were thrown across the Strand to catch the accidental passers by, it would be found that, taking one with another, they were much abler and more intelligent men than the members of the House of Commons. Throw a string across any thoroughfare you choose in the metropolis, excepting of course such localities as St. Giles's and the Seven Dials, and you may depend on it that out of every thirty or forty persons you catch, two if not more are authors. The mere circumstance of having written a book, good, bad, or indifferent, was at one time a mark of distinction of itself. Now almost every man, who can master the most common rules of Lindley Murray, has in

some shape or other, at one time or other of his life, seen himself in print. I recollect hearing of a well-informed young man, much accustomed to literary society, who took the singular whim into his head that he would never read a line of the Waverley Novels. He adhered to his resolution, and used to be pointed out in every literary company as the gentleman who had not read the Scotch novels. The man accustomed to mix with good society, who has not in some way or other been in print, would now be deemed equally singular.

The amazing increase which has taken place of late years in what is called cheap periodical literature, has interfered with the sale of works published in the usual form, and at the usual price. In these cheap publications the public get the cream of what appears in the usual class of works, within a few days or weeks after their appearance, and consequently will not think of purchasing the original works themselves. Until some better protection be afforded to authors and publishers against these wholesale pillagers,

the sale of works in general never can become what it formerly was.

The late republications, in a cheap and elegant form, of the works of popular authors, have very materially contributed to diminish the demand for new productions, published at the usual price. Nearly 40,000 copies of the republication of the works of Sir Walter Scott have been sold. Mr. Murray, it is understood, has disposed of 30,000 copies of Moore's "Life and Works of Byron." The same enterprising publisher has got rid of nearly 8,000 of his edition of the "Works of Crabbe;" and I believe the sale of his Boswell's "Life of Johnson," and his "Johnsoniana," in 10 volumes, has exceeded 5,000. That number of Allan Cunningham's "Life and Works of Burns," was sold by the publishers within twelve months of the completion of the edition. Mr. Valpy's edition of "Shakspeare," commanded a sale of 4,000; and his edition of "Hume and Smollett's England," was not much less successful. Messrs. Saunders and Otley's "Life and Works of Cowper" has had a sale of

some thousands. Messrs. Baldwin and Cradock's edition of the works of the same poet has also had a tolerable sale, though I have not heard any statement of the extent. Of Mr. Macrone's edition of the "Life and Works of Milton," the sale has been between 1,500 and 2,000. All of these works have been sold at five shillings per volume; and in addition to the cheapness of the price, there have been, in every case, the further attractions of the best quality of paper, the most tasteful and accurate typography, beautifully executed engravings, and elegant binding. The circulation of so many volumes throughout the country within the last ten years, must of necessity have lessened, to a very great extent, the sale of those more expensive works which have been published during that period. The public taste, however, is beginning to be diverted from this class of publications, and is likely soon to be turned again into its former channel. Within the last two or three years the demand for such works has so much declined, that no publisher is likely, for some

time to come, to engage with any republication of the same kind. The expense of getting them up is so great, and the price of each volume is so cheap, that a sale of less than 3,500 copies will not render the speculation a safe one for the publisher.

A very great change has also of late come over the spirit of the reading public, with regard to highly-embellished works. Eight or ten years ago there was an immense demand for Annuals; that demand has now so much abated, that several of those which were then so popular have ceased to exist; and two or three others are understood to be published at a loss. Formerly, a sale of 10,000 copies was not deemed extraordinary; now, with the single exception of "Friendship's Offering," which sells between 6,000 and 7,000, I doubt if half that number be disposed of any of them. Nothing short of a sale of 4,500 copies will pay the expenses of getting up an Annual, provided the engravings are executed in a respectable manner. Some years ago, when the spirit of rivalry among the

proprietors of these works was at its height, I knew of one or two instances in which as much as 140*l.* was given for one engraving. Sums of 60*l.* 70*l.* and 80*l.* were then quite common.

Within the last year or two a great alteration has been made in the form of illustrated works. From the small Annual size, the proprietors have leaped to the folio and quarto form. These last sizes are undoubtedly best adapted for the boudoir or the drawing-room table, and they display the graphic embellishments to the greatest advantage; but their want of portability is a very great objection to them; they are not nearly so well suited for presents as the smaller size.

The number of individuals who live in London entirely by their literary labour, has been variously estimated. It is impossible to say with confidence what the exact number is. Among the various conjectures which have been made on the subject, that which computes the number to be about 4,000 appears to me to be the nearest approximation to the truth. Of this number, perhaps about 700 are, in one way or other, con-

nected with periodicals. Many of them, I need hardly say, have no better than chameleon's fare three days out of the seven. The joke of being poor was formerly used only in reference to poets; they have always been so remarkable for their poverty that the words poet and poverty have almost become synonymous. Now the evil of poverty is unhappily felt by the writers of prose as well as poetry, to an extent unparalleled in by-gone times. Grub Street was formerly supposed, by a sort of poetical fiction, to be the only locality of poor authors: now a dozen Grub Streets would not contain the number, even supposing they were to adopt the principle so strictly acted on among the Irish inhabitants of St. Giles's, namely, of a dozen of them vegetating in the same apartment. Now-a-days there is hardly an attic in the humbler localities of the metropolis, but at present has, or has lately had, its poor author as an inmate. I have spoken of 4,000 as being the supposed number of persons who live by their literary labour: were I to include those who have *tried* to live by their

literary exertions, but have been obliged to abandon "the profession," because they found they could not earn by it what was sufficient to keep soul and body together, I should have to double the number. There are scenes of destitution and misery ever and anon exhibited among literary men—aye, and literary women too,—which would make the heart sick. And it ought not to be forgotten that want comes armed to them with aggravated horrors. They are of necessity persons of more sensitive minds than the majority of other sufferers from the ills of poverty; and what adds to the pungency of their distress is the circumstance of their slighted intellectual efforts being almost invariably mixed up with their physical destitution. I myself could detail cases of wretchedness among literary men which have come under my own observation, at the bare mention of which every rightly-constituted mind would stand appalled.

Of the literary profession, above all others, it may be said that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. The most talented

authors are not always the most popular, nor their works the most productive in a pecuniary point of view. I am not sure, indeed, paradoxical as the position may appear, whether, in the majority of cases, works which have attained a great popularity and met an extensive sale, have not been surpassed in merit by many others which have fallen still-born from the press. There are various accidental circumstances which from time to time conspire to force a work of little merit into notice, and procure for it a large sale, while works of superior talent are consigned to eternal oblivion the very moment they have been ushered into being. The writer of the successful work, though possessing little or no merit, may, for instance, have very influential friends in the literary world, who may be the means of pushing it into notice; while the author of the work of great talent may have no friend to lend him a helping hand in the hour of need. In other instances, again, the subject of the former work may be one which suits the false or powerful prejudices of the public at the moment; while

that of the latter may be at direct variance with both. But it is useless to speculate on the subject: the fact is uncontroverted and it is incontrovertible. Let me state two cases in illustration. Milton's "Paradise Lost" was deemed by the publishers of the day a work of so little worth, that he was only able to obtain 15*l.* for the copyright, and that small sum was made payable in three instalments of 5*l.* each. It was not until many years after it was published, that its merits were discovered or appreciated. Had Milton trusted to it, he might have perished of want; while there were doubtless some scores of persons calling themselves literary men, of whom the next generation never heard a syllable, living at the time in ease and comfort by the produce of their literary labours. In the case of Hume, again, when he published the first volume of his "History of England," it proved so complete a failure that he says he would, but for the war at that time preventing it, have changed his name and left the country for ever in disgust. Even at the end of twelve months, only forty-five

copies of his work had sold. If any one looks into the Monthly and Critical Reviews, and other periodicals of the time, he will find that while Hume, instead of gaining anything, must have been a serious loser by his literary labours, there were others, not possessed of a thousandth part of his talents, deriving a handsome income from the exercise of their pens. It is true, indeed, that neither Milton nor Hume is to be included in the catalogue of those men of talent I have spoken of as having had their works consigned to everlasting oblivion the moment they were born; but their resurrection from the land of forgetfulness was merely the effect of chance; and it is beyond all question that the works of many others of great talent have never been awakened, and never will, from the sleep of death into which they fell on the day of their publication.

The literary profession is, of all others, the most precarious. To-day you may be tolerably successful and in passably easy circumstances. To-morrow, you may be most unfortunate and

have to encounter all the horrors of want. This year you may make a hit: you may write a work which will sell: next year, your effort is a decided failure: the day your work is born, is the day of its death.

It is all very well for young men to apply themselves to literary pursuits as an amusement; but he who advises any young friend to make it a profession by which he is to support himself, incurs a responsibility of no ordinary magnitude. The probabilities are in the proportion of a thousand to one that he is advising him to adopt a course which will render him miserable through life. It was the invariable practice of Sir Walter Scott to caution all young persons who submitted their maiden efforts to him, against trusting for their future support to their literary labours. I some time since saw a private letter from him to a young man of good talents and great literary enthusiasm, in which he most earnestly warned him against trusting for his bread to his literary labours, adding, that if he did so, he might consider it as all but certain that he was leaning on a broken reed.

Of all spectacles in the world, I know of none so affecting as that of a man of intellect struggling with all the ills of poverty, and yet applying himself incessantly to literary labour, with the feeble hope that he may in future be more successful than he has been in the times that are past. It is a fine illustration of the scriptural expression of hoping against hope. His physical frame is exhausted from sheer want of the necessaries of life: he shuts himself up in his cold and cheerless garret: his eyes are rarely refreshed by the beauties of nature: his brains are racked; his spirits are jaded; and yet there is just sufficient of the principle of hope left in his otherwise dreary bosom, to prevent his resigning himself to absolute despair. Ill-fated mortal! There he sits and cogitates, and commits this houghts to paper, unknown to and uncared for by the world. The eye of no human being smiles on him: the sympathetic and encouraging accents of no fellow-creature greet his ears. He may be in the busiest and most bustling part of the metropolis, and yet be as much in the depths of solitude as if in

the midst of the vast wilderness of which the author of "The Seasons" so beautifully sings.

I have often been amused at the various expedients to which men sometimes resort to bring themselves into notice, when they cannot accomplish their object by the ordinary means. The Duke of Newcastle attracts that attention in the House of Lords and the country, by his violence, which he could never secure by his eloquence. Colonel Sibthorp's mustachios do the same good service for him in the House of Commons, though his speeches would fail in doing it were he to play the orator till doomsday. Some men attract attention by the singularity of their dress; others by the eccentricity of their conduct. The man of old set fire to the temple though he knew that his own death would be the consequence, rather than that his name should remain unknown. And just now, there appear to be thousands of the lower classes in France who aim at notoriety by their attempts to take away the life of the Citizen King. I have heard of an Irishman, who finding that no one

bestowed a look upon him while he stood in the usual position, drilled himself into the habit of inverting himself in some of the leading thoroughfares; in other words, of standing for several minutes on the crown of his head. But one of the most ingenious and yet convenient expedients of which I have lately heard for bringing oneself into notice, was that before alluded to, of a young man, otherwise well informed, who represented himself as "the man who had never read the Waverley Novels." He observed that every one making any pretensions to intelligence, made a point of displaying in company his acquaintance with the Waverley Novels, and that in consequence of the universality of this, no one brought himself into notice by exhibiting his intimacy with those celebrated productions. He therefore concluded that by affecting a total ignorance of them he was sure to excite attention. The event showed his opinion was correct. He soon found that he could not have adopted an expedient more effectual for his purpose. All eyes were upon him whenever he

mixed in respectable society. Not to have read the Waverley Novels seemed a thing so extraordinary in a literary man, that people were all anxiety to see so singular a person. His company was courted, just as if he had had something about him which distinguished him from the rest of his species. I doubt whether the Learned Pig ever excited greater curiosity. He was invited to routs and parties, not from any abstract friendship for him, but merely as a sort of raree show to the other guests.

I could mention many other ingenious expedients which I have known to be resorted to with the view of attracting attention, in almost every walk of life. In no profession are such expedients more common than in authorship. Experience has mournfully taught authors without number, that no distinction is now-a-days to be acquired by a work written in the ordinary style. To attract attention, it is found that the work must be one out of the usual course. I could give innumerable instances of the schemes devised by literary men with the view of attract-

ing attention to themselves and their works. Some of these are ingenious; others are absolutely ludicrous. A recent author seeks to bring his book of travels into notice by the following ludicrous dedication:—"To all Petty Walkers in go-carts, as well as mighty pedestrians on their own Hind-Legs, who are able to declare themselves such, by having accomplished either a cock-stride in the one case, or a seven-league pace of Peter Schlemil in the other;—and with hearty Wishes for the Prosperity of St. Crispin, and plenty of tough Shoe-leather, this Tour is respectfully dedicated by the Author."

With many authors an "out of the way" preface is thought to be the most likely to attract attention. Here follows an amusing sample of this species of preface writing. It ushers into existence a work in two large volumes, which has appeared within the last six months:—

"What a delightful thing it is to feel free and unconfined!—to be able to write just what one pleases—*to publish it too*—and yet, at the same time to feel, that no creature existing

anywhere throughout the whole system of planets, will ever read it, or know anything about it!

"I'faith, this is delightful:—talk not to me of secrecy—the Holy League is a joke. Let me curvet and frisk now as much as I choose —no person ever reads a preface: 'Preface and botheration,' is the word; 'turn it over, and let's dive into the book—*let's look at the story.* I like this idea—yet it is not uncommon among readers. I feel as private and safe here as Æneas and Dido in the cave after the hunting party—indeed, much more so,—for I have no Dido here—no Dulcinea—to share the retirement of my preface with me. *Tol de rol lol!* Now for a bit of fun—what shall we do? Here we go—let's have a song —*Rum ti iddity iddity!*—Stay, there's no sentiment in that. Let's have another, this is your sorts!—'*There was an old man,*'—no—'*There was an old woman,*'—no—I forget just now. Never mind, we can roar, if we can't sing—'twill serve. I could go on jumping

and prancing like a frisky colt in a meadow, till I dropped down exhausted with the sweet fatigue of excessive frolicking. No earthly being has the slightest notion of my undignified and unmanlike pranks:—a preface—ah! a most secret preface! Oh, it is sweet to relax and sometimes make oneself a little bit of a fool! No one will know it—what shall we do next? My heart is full—huzza! yoicks!—here we go again!—*hoc est vivere!*

"I am almost out of breath—let me pause—let me rest—let me take the ebullitious kettle of my spirits off the fire. Just look—the bubbles soon subside when I do so. And here—with cessation comes gravity—and with gravity comes thought—and with thought comes reflection—and reflection carries a man back to the retrospection and overhauling of his own deeds. And what then?—Why, we perceive we have relaxed a trifle in our dignity and austerity—we have a little eased the tensity of our rank among 'creatures of clay,' as Byron calls us. Can't help it—let's be

merry whilst we are able—we can always cry —not always laugh: besides, there is nothing like being a little *outré* and eccentric, or 'original.' Thousands of clever and wise men have lived and died in oblivion, because they followed the herd:—let's try the opposite course. But Horace writes that Apollo sometimes loosened his bowstring, and Homer sometimes nodded—this is consoling.

"But now we are grave and reflecting; and although we feel positive that no flesh-and-blood biped in the varsel 'orld will at all venture to taste the nut whose shell looks in the slightest prefatorial—yet, it is possible—*just possible*—that some unprecedented and truly strange being *may*, by a species of million-to-one fraction of a chance, skim o'er the page, lightly as Camilla o'er a field of standing corn—*id est*, if the book happens to fall open at the place, as all young ladies' prayer-books do at '*The Solemnization, &c.*'—but, believe us, not otherwise.

"What then?—why nothing partic'lar.

"We have made our tour—and furthermore, we have written our book. Know ye that the first we fully intended to do—but as to the second part of the affair, *that* we had no determination of doing (save our own private notes)—yet it *is* done. How it came about in the previous instance, it is hard to say—harder than *iron*;—no matter—fifty thousand things happen in this world, for which there is no accounting:—but it *is* done.

"The walk was much to undertake in idea—but verily, it was far more to accomplish in deed. Well do I remember the time when I could run about as actively as the best of two-legged animals;—but those days are no more—and I am only astonished, that although in my youth deprived of nearly 'half my understanding,' I have been able to complete that which my unfibbing volumes declare I have done. There is no vanity in feeling astonished at myself in this—i'faith, no—there is no cause. Did I now possess the two good and straight legs which I once wore, and which

I see appended to my corpus with the mind's eye of recollection, I should hint nothing at the feat:—but I do say, even of myself, that when I look back on my wanderings over hill and mountain, enveloped in the clouds thousands of feet high—down under ground hundreds of feet deep—over rock and precipice—through heat and cold—sunshine and rain—that it was a great deal for *me* to do;—and I moreover think, that I shall never do the like again.

"My book is published.—I wrote not for fame—neither for fortune:—I will not say I have either—no matter. I am selfish enough to avow that I have written for *my own* amusement, and not with the studied intention of amusing others. If, however, by chance, these pages fall into the hands of those who feel amused by them—there is no harm done. If, whilst I write for my own amusement, my time be employed to my own improvement,—there is an advantage gained. If, whilst I write for my own improvement, and this my writing fall into the hands of those who may thereby be

improved—there is a double advantage gained. But this last supposition is vanity.—

"Stop—we are getting egotistic and prosy—this will never do—we have changed our key since we began—we have struck a flat third—and how dismal it sounds! This *minore* is abominable:—let us to the *maggiore* after the double-bar, as Euterpe used to say. Come, *brilliante—scherzosamente—presto—con fuoco!* This is more like it—Will this do better? let us sing and *rum-ti-tum* for a few minutes, or else we must *da capo*, and repeat the first strain. And when we have thoroughly blanched our blue devils, we may as well put an end to this most secret preface, *volti subito*, and peep into the book.——

"Come on.——"

This will be admitted, on all hands, to be rich in the ludicorus. There are others, again, who think that the great matter is to open one's work with something striking. Here is a specimen of an attempt of this kind, from a work which has lately appeared:—

" '———————————————————
———————?'

" 'Ay—what? What *are* you talking about? What *did* you say?—for if I heard the words, I am sure I don't understand the sense of the question.'

" '———————————————————
———————?'

" 'There 'tis again! By Jupiter's pig-tail! Stay—I like not the oath. By the *living Jingo!* (I should say.) By the living Jingo and all the little Jingoes;—why, what does this mean? Oh, all ye Jupiters and Junos, that ever kept house upon Mount Olympus, what is to be done with mortality, when wit and reason go a wool-gathering? *Who* is it can have possibly instilled into your brain such a Hudibrastical, Quixotical, knight-errantical idea? Oh, madness, madness! I' faith, all this will never do: you can-*not* (giving it peculiar emphasis,) you can-*not* be in earnest. Oh, man, (for such I had thought thee,) how art thou puerilised! Do you *really*

intend it—do you *really* mean to go? and so far—perhaps a thousand miles! Preposterous! Oh, reason, whither hast thou fled? Why hast thou, (for I'm sure thou hast,) why hast thou bid adieu to thy more than twenty years' lodgment, to seek another home, I know not where? Hast thou fled, to roam among the rugged mountains? to chase the bearded goat to his Alpine den? to listen to the foaming torrent chafing o'er its rocky bed? Hast thou fled to the sunny banks of some crystal lake, to lie thee down, and hang o'er its waters like Eve, and view thyself in reflection? or dost thou, like Diana, delight in the forest? To what region hast thou gone? for like another Hamlet, thou hast passed from hence, to wanton elsewhere. And dost thou, with a curling finger, beck to thy old dwelling to follow thee?'

"'Go! I must—the die of my inclination and purpose is cast. To argue thus, methinks you view me not with reason's eye.'

"'You speak not now with reason's tongue.'

" 'Excuse, and hear me.'

" 'I' faith I will: for I long to hear the English of this thine outlandish——'

" 'Nay, not outlandish—I'm not going to sea——'

" 'Sea! who the d—— said a word about sea?'

" 'I thought you did—at least indirectly.'

" 'Not I; either directly or indirectly,'—straight for'ard or backward—sideways, or upwards, or downwards.'

" 'Know, then, in brief, that this century is not the last century.'

" 'True.'

" 'Don't interrupt me. That is, that the features of things wear not precisely the same air and bearing to-day, as they did in the yesterday of the past hundred summers.'

" 'True—a century works a change on the features of most of us.'

" 'The times do not wag in our age as they did in the age of our fathers.'

" 'True.'

" ' Fathers do not now, as they did then, know how to dispose of a family of overgrown idle boys.'

" ' True—then are you a father with a family of overgrown idle boys?'

" ' No: more like an idle boy, the son of my father.'

" ' True.'

" ' Here I am, grown up to man's estate, nourished in the kindly soil of ' sweet home :' and although I well know that there is no geography in the world so agreeable to study, as *the geography of up and down stairs at home, and from the parlour to the drawing-room*, yet I am of opinion, that when a hobbeddehoy becomes cracked, (that is, in his throat,) or as Portia would say, when he speaks with a *reed* voice, (*buzz*,) he should think of placing his breast against the boisterous and buffeting storms of more active life.'

" ' True.'

" ' A lame leg is not the thing for a soldier or a sailor—or a soldier or a sailor is not the thing with a lame leg.'

"'True.'

"'—— or else, I swear by the trident of thirsty Neptune! I would, long ere this, have cut Hippotades' silver-thonged bag of winds, and faced the howling of the enlarged tempest, even as the adventurous Ulysses himself.'

"'It is probable you would.'

"'But if a man cannot say, 'the world is mine oyster, and with my sword will I open it,' he must e'en call the world his something else, and endeavour to open this something else, with that weapon which he rather chooses to wield; or, indeed, which the fates choose to place in his hands—(whether or-nay, Mr. Thomas Collins)——'

"'If his microcosm should lie on the face of a sheet of paper, then let him open it with a pen, as the great Shakspeare did.'

"'Shakspeare! Ah, or Johnson, since him.'——

"'True—or Wordsworth, one might add.'

"'And Coleridge too.'——

"'And Byron.'——

" ' And Sir Walter Scott.'——

" ' And fifty others !'——

" ' Fifty? ay, a hundred !'——

" ' Ah, five hundred !'——

" ' A thousand !'——

" ' Ay, ten thousand ! !'——

" ' Twenty thousand ! ! !'——

" ' Or if it should be the church, let him open his pulpit-world with wholesome doctrine—words that will teach his fellow-labourers in the vineyard love to each other, honesty, upright dealing, and, above all, the essence of virtue's sweet attribute—gratitude. That which will make a man feel his dependence and insignificance, and teach him to look beyond himself, and beyond the life in which he exists." '

Some authors hope to attract attention by short and striking chapters. Here is one of the most brief and striking which has ever come under my notice. The greatest lover of the short and sweet must be satisfied with it:—

" CHAPTER XII.

" What a horrible thing is sea-sickness!"

This actually forms an entire chapter in a recent work, and is diffused over a whole page! Such writers must be prodigiously popular with the compositors, if with nobody else. This is what the latter call " fat" work.

The same writer presents his readers with the following, as another chapter of his work:

—" ' Beg pardon, gentlemen,' said a third pedestrian, good-humouredly bursting into the room without ceremony; and who, in the true vein of walking intellectualism, likewise carried a knapsack on his back—' Beg pardon, gentlemen, 'pon honour,' said he, as he entered, and apparently believing that he intruded on two strangers.

" ' Hullo!' cried the lieutenant, starting up from his chair, as he recognised an old friend: 'Why, how the d—— did you come——?"

" But the other interrupted him in a whirlwind of astonishment.——

"'Why, where the d—— did you come——'

"The first held his sides and set up a sardonic roar of laughter.——

"'When the d——' (cutting him short.)

"'Which road——' (stopping him half way.)

"'How the d———' (preventing him again.)

"'When——'

"'How long——'

"'What the d——'

"'Where the d——'

"'Who the d——'

"'Which the d——'

"'How the d——'

"'What brought you——'

"'Did you——'

"'Have you come——'

"'How——'

"'When——'

"'Why——'

"'Which——'

"'Where——'

"'What——'

"'How far——'

"'Who——'

"'My good fellow——'

"'Did you——'

"'Have you——'

"'When——'

"'I say——'

"'How——'

"'What——'

"—Pedrestres, for safety, pushed his chair aside out of the way."

Alas! had poor Sterne been alive he would have been ashamed to see himself so far outstripped by our author in the use of dashes, breaks, inverted commas, and so forth.

Let me give one more specimen of the efforts made by authors in modern times to attract attention to themselves and their works. Here is an entire chapter. It is one which every author could not write:—

"'Who are you, I wonder, that you should turn to, and abuse me in this way?'

"'You are a great rascal, and if you don't hold your tongue and learn to be civil, I'll very soon teach you.'

"Bother, bother, bother, bother!—Clatter, clatter, clatter! rattle, rattle, rattle!—

"'By jingo, Clavileno, what can all that quarrelling be about down stairs?'

"'I'faith, I know not; but words are running very high below.'———

"Bow wow wow wow wow!—rattle, rattle, rattle, rattle, rattle!—

"'Just listen to them, they will come to blows directly.'

"'Suppose we go and see what is the matter.'

"'It sounds like two bickering, peevish men, sparring for nothing—just for the sake of disagreeing.'

"'Let us go down and ask them the cause of all this.'

"Bother, bother, bother, bother!

"'Egad! louder and faster than ever.'

"Bow wow wow wow wow!

"'There they go again!'

"Rattle, rattle, rattle! Clatter, clatter, clatter!"

"'Why, my good fellows, what is all this for? Reason mildly on your grievances, 'beseech you.

Let me play the impartial umpire between you, —tell me your troubles: you are surely not quarrelling for a drop of drink? Tell me your disagreement—let me know it, will you? Let me endeavour to pacify you. Won't you answer me? Won't you give me a word? not one word? What! not turned sulky in a moment! Won't you answer? Are you dumb? Have you instantaneously lost your tongues?'

"The sullen fellows would give no further reply than will be found on the next two pages."

In illustration of the last remark, the author gives two pages of his book unsoiled by a single letter, meaning that "the sullen fellows" gave no answer at all. I have not ventured, for the sake of illustrating his peculiar views of writing, to follow his example. Let my reader only fancy that my next two pages are completely blank, and they will realise, in their own minds, the manner of this author. To give blank pages in this way, is an easy way of making up a book: it is a cheap mode of authorship. It is one, however, which readers in ordinary circum-

stances would not much approve of, though I am pretty confident they would not, in the case of the writer in question, even had one half of his book consisted of blank pages.

I have said I would proceed no further in my examples of the singular expedients resorted to by authors, with the view of attracting attention to their works. I may just mention, however, that not long since, an author seriously proposed to his publishers, that they should endeavour to prevail on some of the newspapers to allow an advertisement of his book to appear, in an inverted position,—as he was sure that would attract the attention of every reader in a special manner to the work. Whether the author in question adopted the hint from the American shopkeeper who, for the same reason, caused his signboard to be put up above his door, with the wrong side uppermost, is a point I have not the means of deciding.

CHAPTER IV

AUTHORS AND PUBLISHERS.

Literary remuneration of popular authors—Mistaken notions of authors as to the expected sale of their works — Imprudence of authors in publishing on their own account — "Gentlemen Publishers" — Illustrative anecdotes — Various arrangements between authors and publishers — Extent of the Editions of various kinds of works—Popularity of works—Expenses connected with the publication of books—Disposing of works to the trade—Number of publishers and booksellers in London — Advantages and disadvantages of popularity to an author — The fate of authors often dependent on purely accidental and trifling circumstances — An instance given — General remarks.

AUTHORS and publishers are so associated with each other in the appearance of literary works, that they may with the greatest propriety be

classed together in a chapter of such a nature as it is intended the present shall be.

In the previous chapter I have spoken of the exceedingly precarious character of the literary profession. My observations, however, will not have been understood as applying in every case. They do apply in the vast majority of cases; but there are numerous exceptions. The case of Sir Walter Scott was an illustrious exception. His average income from his literary talents could not, for some years before his death, have been much short of 12,000*l.*: for he received 3,750*l.* for permission to print an edition of 10,000 copies of several of his novels; and he ordinarily wrote three novels every year, besides his various contributions to periodicals. Byron, too, turned his genius to excellent pecuniary account. From first to last, it is understood that he received upwards of 20,000*l.* from Mr. Murray for his works. Moore also used to derive a large income from his intellectual exertions. For his life and works of Lord Byron, he is said to have received from

Mr. Murray 2,000*l.* Mr. Murray is understood to have given 2,000*l.* for the copyright of Washington Irving's "Life of Columbus." For the first volume of Colonel Napier's "History of the Peninsular War," the same publisher gave the gallant author the sum of one thousand guineas. It is calculated that Southey derives an annual income of about 1,000*l.* from his literary labours. There is no doubt, I believe, that Messrs. Baldwin and Cradock gave him last year 1,000*l.* for his Life, &c. of Cowper. That literature has proved, and ever will prove a very lucrative profession to those who have most distinguished themselves in its higher walks, will appear from a statement of the prices which many authors have received for their works.

Mr. Edward Lytton Bulwer got, if my information be correct, no less a sum than 1,600*l.* for his "Rienzi," from Messrs. Saunders and Otley, who have also paid him similar amounts for several of his other works. The same publishers gave Captain Marryat 1,000*l.*, or one thousand guineas, I am not sure which, for his

"Japhet in Search of a Father," though the work had, in some measure, lost the freshness of novelty, through its previous appearance in the "Metropolitan Magazine." Mr. Galt always got from 200*l.* to 300*l.* for his novels; and when any of them came to a second edition, he usually got something more.

I could mention several other instances, in which other authors have received douceurs from publishers, when the works reached second or third editions; but as the circumstance is by no means uncommon, it is unnecessary to refer particularly to individual cases. It is but right, however, to state, that this is, in some cases, more from considerations of good policy than from the mere impulses of a generous feeling. Publishers sometimes make authors presents of the kind referred to, as an inducement to write other works, of which they expect, of course, to have the publication. Let me mention one striking instance of genuine liberality on the part of the publisher to a successful author. Allan Cunningham was engaged to furnish

Mr. Murray with six volumes of his "Lives of the British Painters," &c. at 600*l.*, or 100*l.* each volume, for the "Family Library." He executed his task to the satisfaction of his employer and the public. Mr. Murray, on its great success, showed that he could appreciate merit by doubling his terms; in other words, by giving Allan 1,200*l.*, instead of 600*l.*, exclusive of a handsomely bound set of the "Quarterly Review," from the commencement of the work. It is to the credit of the trade, that while there are some publishers who would screw down a poor author to a scale of remuneration for his works which would render his social condition little better than that of a mechanic, there are others who are forward not only to appreciate, but suitably to reward his efforts. Messrs. Saunders and Otley* are favourably known among literary men for the liberality of their terms to writers of celebrity.

* This was written before the author was aware that Messrs. Saunders and Otley were to be the publishers of his work.

Messrs. Longman and Co. have, on several occasions, given a high rate of remuneration for literary labour. The case I have mentioned of Messrs. Baldwin and Cradock giving Southey so large a sum for his Life of Cowper, is one instance of their liberality. I know various instances in which Messrs. Whittaker and Co. have given large sums for works of merit; but from the way in which the information has been communicated to me, I am not sure it would be proper to make a public use of it. I am in the same situation in respect to the prices given by other publishers for particular works.

I have mentioned the sum which Allan Cunningham received for the volumes which he furnished to Mr. Murray's "Family Library." For his "Life and Works of Burns," in eight volumes, published by Messrs. Cochrane and Macrone, he got 800*l.* Mr. Galt got from the same publishers, 250*l.* for his "Autobiography." The price which Mr. Robert Montgomery Martin received, from Mr. Cochrane, for his "History of the British Colonies," in five volumes, was about 800*l.* Mr. Cochrane gave

very liberal remuneration to literary men in several other instances which have come under my own immediate observation; but it is not necessary to allude to them in detail. Mr. Willis got 250*l.* from Mr. Macrone, for his "Pencillings by the Way." What Messrs. Saunders and Otley gave him for his "Inklings of Adventure," I have not heard. The usual price of works of fiction, in three volumes, written by popular authors, has of late been from 200*l.* to 300*l.*: formerly it was higher; but, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, the falling off in the demand for works of that class has been so great as to render it hazardous for publishers to offer a higher sum than the above. As it is, comparatively few, even of those written by novelists of distinguished reputation, obtain a remunerating sale. In two or three late instances, novelists of the first class have got as high as 500*l.*, but the publishers have been losers by the transaction. Illustrated works, got up in the style of the annuals, have, in some recent cases, "fetched" a high price in the literary market. Captain Marryat, in 1835, received for his "Pirate,"

in one volume, no less than 750*l.*, from Mr. Heath, who has brought out so many illustrated works. And Mr. Bulwer, if I remember rightly, got 800*l.* for his "Pilgrims of the Rhine," also in one volume.

It will be seen, from the above statements, that there are a few authors who reap an abundant pecuniary harvest, as well as a harvest of fame, from their literary labours; but they are only a few, compared with those who get nothing, or next to nothing, for their toil and trouble.

Authors of second or third-rate works of fiction, no doubt, think they are very inadequately remunerated when they receive from 100*l.* to 200*l.* for the copyright. What would they have thought of the price usually given half a-century ago for the same class of publications? At that time it was a rare circumstance for publishers to give more than 5*l.* or 10*l.* for the manuscript of novels, except in those cases in which the author had previously acquired a first-rate reputation as a novelist. The fact was, that publishers, fifty years ago, found that

the public taste was in favour of more solid mental food, and that the sale of novels was seldom sufficiently large to meet the necessary expenses of mere paper and print. For historical, philosophical, or any other class of works, however, conveying important information, when written by distinguished authors, the publishers of that period were in the habit of paying large sums. Dr. Hawkesworth got the immense sum of 6,000*l.* for his voyages round the world, though only a compilation. I do not at this moment recollect the number of volumes to which the work extended, but I think it did not exceed fifteen. Dr. Robertson got 4,500*l.* for his "History of Charles the Fifth," in four volumes; and the same writer got 600*l.* for his "History of Scotland," in two volumes. Smellie, the translator of Buffon's works, got 1,000*l.* for his own work on the "Philosophy of Natural History." Hume only received 200*l.* for his first part of the "History of England;" but that proving eminently successful, he got, in one shape or another, full 5,000*l.* for it, before it was

finished. Mr. Creech, the then Prince of Publishers, had the honour of bringing most of these works before the public. Mr. Creech, I believe, was the first publisher who ever paid for contributions to periodicals. The mode of making his first payment was curious. He sent two pipes of wine to Mackenzie, the author of the "Man of Feeling," as a return for various valuable contributions which the latter had made to a periodical, "The Lounger,"—if my memory be not at fault,—which then belonged to him. After that time, the same publisher commenced the practice of paying in money, which soon became general in the case of all respectable periodicals. I am indebted for this interesting anecdote to one of the sons of the celebrated author of "The Man of Feeling" himself.

Of all hopes there are none so illusory as those which are based on one's literary labours; and yet there are none in which authors are so apt to indulge. They are cheered and supported amidst all the labour they are doomed,

or, rather, which they doom themselves, to undergo, by the expectation of fame and profit. Almost every one flatters himself that the publication of his work will create a sensation in the literary world. The day of publication comes—and passes away too—and what does he find? The realisation of his sanguine and dearly-cherished hopes? No: but in all probability he hears nothing of his work except in the advertisements of the publishers, or, it may be, in a passing faint commendation given it in some review. He asks his publishers how it sells. The answer comes on him with the effect of a thunderbolt, as if launched by the hand of Jove himself—"It does not sell at all:" in other words, only a few copies have been disposed of. In the agony and mortification of the moment, he wishes, it may be, he had never been born; certain it is, he wishes his *book* had never been born. And yet, in the course of a year or two, if he have the means, you will find the unfortunate author, again continuing the midnight

toil, hoping against hope he will be more fortunate next time., Next time comes and he encounters the same disappointment, and so on to the end of the chapter.

The uninitiated will wonder, after what I have stated of the immense number of failures on the part of authors, how it happens that publishers undertake to bring out their works at all. The publishers are, generally, a shrewd class of men; and they do not incur the risk of publishing one half perhaps of the works which are daily making their appearance. The other half are published at the expense of the authors, many of whom lose a great deal in this way. A popular tragedian, about eighteen months since, published a novel, in two volumes, on his own account, which he had written. It never sold to the extent of twenty-five copies: he was a loser by his adventure to the extent of 200*l.* Several other similar miscalculations have been made by authors within the last twelve months. I know some instances in which the works were what is called heavy, that is, large in size

and closely printed, in which authors have lost nearly 1,000*l.* at once. Even in the pamphlet way, great losses are sometimes sustained. I lately heard the Rev. Mr. P., a metropolitan clergyman of the Church of England, mention that he had lost altogether 600*l.* by his various pamphlets against the Socinians and Roman Catholics. The Rev. Dr. Dibdin, in his "Literary Reminiscences," lately published, gives some particulars of a rather interesting nature respecting his adventures in this way.

I would lay it down as a rule, and it will be found to admit of but few exceptions, that those who cannot afford, or who have not the disposition to lose money, should not risk the publication of a work which the leading publishers have declined to undertake on their own account. From what I know of the publishing trade, I can say with confidence that, taken in the aggregate, they are much more apt to err in accepting than in rejecting works. Take all those works which, when refused by the trade, have been published by the authors themselves,

and it will be found that not one out of fifty pays its expenses. These are odds sufficiently fearful, one would think, to make an author, to whom money is an object, hesitate before he engages in the speculation of publishing on his own account.

There is another class of authors, though their number is now much less than it was some years ago, who publish on their own account for very different reasons. They do so from that avaricious spirit which causes men to grasp at the profits of both author and publisher. A well-known bibliopole with whom I lately had some conversation on the subject, happily characterised such authors, as "Gentlemen Publishers." It will be found in a number of cases, that those who publish their works on their own account, merely employing some bookselling house as their agent, are gentlemen of rank, and that they have previously received considerable reputation as literary men. This practice of uniting the functions of the publisher with those of the author, is not very reputable

in the cases to which I refer. It is not merely a violation of good taste, inasmuch as it is an intrusion into a field which they have no right to enter, but it is, practically, to all intents and purposes, an attempt to deprive a most meritorious class of individuals of the means of existence. The trade has suffered severely from these gentlemen interlopers.

It is idle to say, that though gentlemen become their own publishers, they must of necessity employ booksellers, as they cannot themselves sell every isolated copy of their works. All true; but the profit which an agent or deputy publisher is in this case allowed, is so small, that no respectable house could maintain its character with it. The commission, as I have before mentioned, allowed to the house which acts as agent, is usually only ten per cent. on the amount sold. With this sum the house is not only to be remunerated for the trouble to which it must put itself in the sale of the work, but it has also to defray the expenses of the establishment. The house must further run the risk of bad debts;

the author making no allowance for these. It is clear, I repeat, that on such a source of revenue none of our large publishing houses could long maintain their influence and respectability.

The circumstance which has of late led so many gentlemen authors to become their own publishers,—thus blending, in "discordant harmony," as an Irishman would say, the character of tradesman with that of gentleman,—is the supposed "prodigious" profits which publishers derive from their trade. How far the profits of publishers are exaggerated, may be inferred from the fact, that very few of them, even after a very laborious application for many years to their calling, have succeeded in making more than a respectable livelihood. It is true they have very large profits in some cases. I know a late instance in which a house cleared about 1,200*l.* on two volumes, in little more than eighteen months; but then what is gained on the one hand, is often lost on the other. That a few enterprising houses have made handsome

fortunes by publishing, is not to be denied; but what are such instances, compared with the hundreds in which publishers have either failed in business, or only succeeded, by great care and exertion, in making the bare means of subsistence?

As regards the profits of the mere venders of books, very extravagant notions are also entertained by those unacquainted with the subject. Mr. Babbage, in his work on the "Economy of Manufactures," has done much to confirm and extend the error. The nominal profits of booksellers, in retailing literary works, is twenty-five per cent.; but this amount of profit dwindles down to a mere trifle, when due allowances are made for bad debts, for the number of copies which often remain unsold, and for the outlay of capital on which returns are seldom obtained sooner than twelve months; often not even in that lengthened time. Mr. Babbage says, that booksellers need not order books except when they are bespoke. Here Mr. Babbage, while assuming to be much better informed on the

subject than the rest of his fellow-men, betrays a degree of ignorance which would be discreditable to a schoolboy of the fourth or fifth class. Authors mourn over the lack of literary taste that obtains, as evinced in the limited sale of their works; but were Mr. Babbage's notions of bookselling generally adopted, their ground for lamentation would be increased in a tenfold degree. It is only by booksellers taking a number of copies of new works on chance, and then exhibiting them in their shops, and otherwise submitting them to the inspection of their customers, that the majority of copies are disposed of. Of all commodities, those of a literary kind stand most in need of what is called pushing; and if booksellers make the necessary exertion, take the necessary trouble, and incur the risk of serious loss from bad debts and unsold copies, it is but fair they should have a reasonable allowance made them.

But the trade are not the only parties injured by the practice of gentlemen publishing their

own works. In the majority of cases, these gentlemen publishers are serious sufferers themselves from their bibliopolic speculations. Poor Sir Egerton Brydges has lost a little fortune in this way. His "Autobiography" contains some useful admonitions to gentlemen publishers, grounded on his own experience, respecting the pecuniary disadvantages of authors publishing their own works. One may safely undertake to say, that though Sir Egerton were to live to the age of Methuselah, he would never publish another work on his own account. There are others I could name, and men of great reputation too, who have been out of pocket to a considerable extent by publishing on their own account, who, if they had sold their works to publishers, would have got a handsome sum for them.

The truth is that no author, whatever his popularity, can do the same justice to his work as regards the promotion of its sale, as a respectable publisher. The agent he employs has not the same inducement to exertion as if the property were his own, and consequently will

not make the same exertions to insure an extensive sale. It is in the bookselling world as in everything else—the greatness of a man's exertions will always be proportioned to the strength of the motive. No influential house, where they are only the agents, will ever call their full forces into play. They will only do that—they will only avail themselves of the aid of their various and powerful connexions in trade, when the property is their own, and the alternative of considerable gain or considerable loss affects themselves alone.

I could illustrate, by innumerable instances, the extent to which the success of a work is affected by the circumstance of whether it be published for the author, or for some respectable house. I will, however, confine myself to a single case. A literary friend of my own was some time since employed by one of the most influential publishing firms in town, to write a short treatise on a subject of general interest. The terms were high—twenty guineas per sheet. The work was written and printed, and every

exertion possible made to insure its success. The price was cheap, and the publishers having influential connexions in every part of the kingdom, the sale in the space of a few months exceeded 20,000 copies. The author, though in the first instance perfectly satisfied with the terms he received, grew discontented when he saw the extent of the sale, and deeply regretted that he had not published the work on his own account. He calculated the enormous profits the publishers must have made, and thought they would have been much better in his pocket than in theirs. Regret, however, was unavailing in so far as the past was concerned; but, as he conceived, a happy idea occurred to him as to the future. He would extend the work to other two parts, and publish it himself; in other words, he would join the brotherhood of gentlemen publishers. The house for which he had written the two first parts, heard of his being engaged on two additional ones, and offered him the same terms as before. He at once rejected them. They raised their offer to twenty-four guineas

per sheet; but he unceremoniously declined it, telling them he was determined on publishing the work on his own account. They disadvised him from the speculation, and pointed out the probable difference as to sale, between their extensive and powerful bookselling connexion, and his utter want of such connexion. The advice was disregarded: it was ascribed to interested motives. To press he would go, and to press he went, on his own account. The same number of copies, viz. 20,000, was ordered to be thrown off. The book appeared; it was largely advertised. What does the reader suppose was the number of copies sold in the same time as it required to dispose of 20,000 of the former parts, published by the influential house alluded to? It was considerably under 500!

The public have no idea of the activity, and tact, and influence, necessary to insure a remunerating sale to any literary work; and these, I repeat, are qualities which are only possessed in their combination by the most respectable publishing houses. The public, I may add, have no

idea of the extensive losses which many gentlemen publishers incur, who either overrate the merits of their own works, or underrate the difficulties which attend the publishing business. It is only two or three years, since I myself was consulted by the near relative of a well-known nobleman residing in the country, about the publication, in London, of a work of the former. I advised him to dispose of the copyright to some respectable publisher. He would not hear of the proposition; he looked at it in very much the same light as if I had seriously meditated an attack on his pocket. He would have it brought out on his own account, for no other reason in the world than that he wished to pocket all the fancied profits himself. He asked my opinion of what the extent as to the impression ought in the first instance to be: his own notion was that 2,000 was the lowest number of copies he should print. I advised him to content himself with 500. My counsel was looked on by him in very much the same light as a deliberate insult. Eventually, I got him per-

suaded to throw off no more than 1,000 copies. When, however, he concurred in my suggestion to that effect, it was only because he thought it would be an object to have another 1,000 printed immediately after, as a second edition. That a second edition would be called for in a few weeks after the publication of the work, appeared to him as certain as his own existence. In due time the work made its appearance; the agents were a respectable house in the metropolis; it was extensively advertised; but the agents had no special inducement to push its sale. Anxious to learn indirectly how the work was selling, the author desired a friend, who was in town, to get a copy of it for him from the agent's, without, however, letting his friend know (the work was published anonymously) that he was the author. His friend did call at a bookseller's, but not at the agent's for the work, and asked for a copy. The bookseller not having seen the volume, but confounding it with one similar in title, which had been published some years before, and the whole impression of which

had by that time been sold off, stated that the work the gentleman inquired for had been some time out of print. The author's friend immediately wrote to him that the work he had commissioned him to procure was out of print. It will readily be guessed with what sovereign contempt on receiving the letter, my literary judgment and my opinion of the wants of the reading public, were regarded. The author wrote by return of post to his London agents, to get a *second* edition printed forthwith, and dreaming of nothing but pecuniary profit and literary glory, desired them to send him a statement of his and their account. The agents, with the most provoking nonchalance, wrote in answer that they thought it would be in all good time to publish a *second* edition when there was some appearance of getting rid of the *first*; that the demand, if such it might ever be called, was completely over, no copy of the work having been called for for the last month, and that the entire number of copies sold was seven! With what surprise and horror the author received this inti-

mation, it is left to the reader to guess. The statements I have made are, I repeat, facts which came under my own immediate cognizance.

The late Mr. Johnson, of St. Paul's Churchyard, a well-known publisher of religious works, used to tell a laughable anecdote illustrative of the extravagant notions which authors often entertain of the demand there will be for their works. A clergyman called on him, and said that he wished him to be the agent for a volume of sermons, price 10*s.* 6*d.*, which he (the clergyman) had resolved on publishing on his own account. The bibliopole asked him how many copies he meant to throw off. "At least 10,000," replied the divine. The worthy publisher remonstrated, saying that 250 would be nearer the mark. "Two hundred and fifty!" exclaimed the theologian, in a tone of stifled indignation at the censure cast on his professional acquirements, as he thought, by the observation. "Two hundred and fifty!" Why there are at least 10,000 clergymen in the communion of the

Church of England, and every one of them will have a copy. Get me 10,000 copies printed," said the divine, with an air of self-importance, "and if they are not all sold, I myself will have to sustain the loss alone." "Very well," said the publisher, and the parties bade each other good morning. The volume of divinity appeared, and continued to be advertised in all the magazines and papers for nearly six weeks. In about three months after the publication, the reverend author came to town (he was the rector of a parish in Yorkshire) with the sole view of balancing accounts with his bookseller, and receive the anticipated profits. A statement of accounts was demanded by the clergyman, and instantly furnished by the other. It was substantially as follows:—

	£.	s.	d.
To printing and correcting . .	246	0	0
To paper	482	0	0
To boarding	180	0	0
To advertising	66	15	0
	974	15	0

Brought forward . . .	974	15	0
The number of copies sold was 45, amounting, after deducting commission and allowance to the trade, to	15	15	0
Making the balance due by author to his agents, &c. . . .	£959	0	0

The rev. gentleman was quite horror-struck at this "statement of accounts." He declared himself a ruined man by the result of his publishing speculation. The worthy bibliopole, seeing he had fairly convinced the divine how grossly he had over-estimated the demand for books, told him the account he had submitted to him was drawn out agreeably to the number of copies he had *ordered* to be printed; but that he, knowing better about such matters, had instructed the printer to throw off only 250 copies. A thousand blessings invoked on the head of Mr. Johnson, was the emphatic manner in which the reverend author expressed his obligations to his benefactor.

But of all men, Sir Walter Scott was the greatest sufferer, though not in the same way as in the case alluded to, from publishing on his own account. It is true, Sir Walter was not his own publisher altogether; but he was partly so. The profits of his later works were to be shared between him and his printer and publisher. These arrangements ultimately led to his engaging in other speculations, and to his acceptance of bills to a large amount. The consequence was, that Sir Walter got himself involved in pecuniary responsibilities for Mr. Constable to an extent which eventually proved ruinous. His pecuniary embarrassments preyed so much on his sensitive mind, as to bring on that disease of which he at last became the victim. Had the author of "Waverley" contented himself with entirely disposing of the copyright of his later works as he did of the earlier ones, for a specific sum, he might still have been the brightest living ornament of modern literature.

But pecuniary disadvantages are not the only evils which result to authors from the injudicious practice of publishing on their own ac-

count; their literary reputation also suffers severely from it. I have already shown, that authors can never do that justice to their works, in the article of sale, which publishers can. It consequently follows, that where books are not read, their merits cannot be appreciated.

It is no less obvious, that literature itself is an equal sufferer from the practice I am condemning. Many a meritorious work has fallen still-born from the press, in consequence of the author becoming his own publisher. The result is, that not only is the work in question comparatively lost to the world of literature, but the author himself, disgusted with his failure, most probably resolves that he shall never again make his appearance in the republic of letters. I am convinced that the flame of many a bright genius has by this means been extinguished, which otherwise would have shone on the world with great splendour.

And here I must remark, that both authors and literature are under the deepest obligations

to publishers. I do not mean to say that a publisher can put brains into a brainless author, or can make the book intrinsically better than it is; but by his tact, his activity, and enterprise, he gives it an opportunity which it would never otherwise have had of being seen and read, and consequently of its merits, if it have any, being duly appreciated. So far, therefore, publishers have the making of authors, and so far they prove most efficient auxiliaries in the cause of literature. I hold that we are to a very great extent indebted to judicious publishers for many of the best and most popular works in modern literature. Had these works not made their appearance under the auspices of influential publishers, and been by them kept ingeniously and perseveringly before the public, their merits would have been but slightly known, and the books themselves consequently suffered to sleep in undisturbed oblivion on the shelf or in the warehouse. The authors, as a matter of course, would, as already hinted, shrink from a second

experiment on the literary discernment of the public, and fall back into that obscurity whence they had vainly endeavoured to emerge.

To establish my position still more clearly; suppose Sir Walter Scott, instead of selling the copyright of "Waverley," which everybody knows was his first novel, to the late enterprising and influential Mr. Constable, had, like the gentlemen publishers of the present day, got it out on his own account, will any one who knows any thing of publishing maintain, that in that case "Waverley" would have met with a tithe of the success it did meet with as the property of Mr. Constable? And if it had not succeeded, the illustrious author would never have written another novel; for he has expressly recorded, that it was put forward as an experiment on public taste, and that the circumstance of his proceeding in, or relinquishing for ever the new walk of fiction he had chalked out for himself, wholly depended on the reception which "Waverley" should meet with. To Mr. Constable, therefore, and to the circumstance of his having bought the copyright

of that novel, we are in one sense as much indebted, as to the author himself, for the most splendid series of fictions which ever emanated from the human imagination. No one was more sensible of this than Sir Walter himself; and no one could have been more forward to acknowledge it. I myself have seen several such acknowledgments under his own hand, made spontaneously to persons with whom he was corresponding. What a number of other authors are under equal obligations, in the same respect, to their publishers! I wish that they and the public were equally sensible of them.

From all I have said, it is demonstrably obvious, as already hinted, that the fortunes of literature are in a great measure in the hands of publishers. If their influence and respectability be not sustained and fostered by the confidence and liberality of authors, English literature must of necessity be a serious sufferer.

An arrangement is sometimes made between authors and publishers, which is a sort of medium between an author's publishing the

book on his own account, or disposing of it to a publisher. I allude to the practice of going half-and-half, as it is called. The parties agree that they shall equally share the losses, or divide the profits, or that the publisher take all the risk, just as the case happens. This has been found to work well, where the house is honourable, as it secures to the author the full benefit of the publisher's exertions. It has, besides, the recommendation of its being perfectly equitable. I have heard that Mrs. Jamieson's popular works have been all brought out in this way, very much to her satisfaction and advantage.

There is another arrangement between authors and publishers which has become very frequent of late. I refer to the practice of an author agreeing to let his publisher print a certain number of copies on certain terms; and in the event of the impression being got rid of, the copyright reverting to him. This is, perhaps, as fair an arrangement for both parties as could be made. If the publisher disposes of the edition, he is sure, from the terms he has made,

to have a fair profit; and it is optional for him to make a new arrangement with the author or not, just as he thinks the demand for the book is or is not likely to continue. If it be, then the author shares with his publisher the benefit of the proceeds from the new edition. It is on these terms that many of our most popular authors dispose of their works. The same kind of arrangement is becoming general among the most distinguished writers in France. Balzaac never consents to the publication of any of his works on any other terms. No price which a bookseller can offer, will induce him to part with the entire copyright of any of his productions.

Another arrangement which is fair and equitable to all parties, is that of an author agreeing to make the amount of his remuneration contingent on the sale of the work. Supposing, for example, it were deemed probable that a work would reach a sale of 1,250 copies, the author, according to the arrangement to which I refer, would consent to take a given sum, say 100*l.* on the day of publication, and make another 100*l.*

or 50*l.*, according to the size and price of the book, contingent on the sale of 1,000 copies. The author, by such an arrangement, secures, as it is reasonable he should, a certain sum in return for his literary labours; while the publishers, by his consenting to make the remainder of the price agreed on conditional on a certain amount of sale, are not exposed to the risk of losing so much by their enterprise, as if they had had to pay down the entire sum unconditionally and at once. I do think it unreasonable on the part of authors to decline coming to terms with publishers unless they get the amount of money they are willing to take paid to them, without regard to the success of the work. I think it is all that can be reasonably expected of publishers, that they should, in addition to incurring all the expenses of publication, which are heavy, make the author such an advance, without reference to the sale of the work, as affords him a fair remuneration for his labour. I often wonder how authors, especially those who are in easy circumstances, could have

any pleasure in getting large sums of money for their works, when aware that the publishers are serious losers by them. I have no notion of publishers having by far the greater share of the profits of a work, when an author has spun his brains to some purpose; but neither, on the other hand, do I think it fair or reasonable, that authors should exact such terms of them, after they run all the risk of publication, as will leave them but a trifling profit, should the work meet with the expected success, but which, in the event of its not reaching the anticipated sale, will leave them with a loss. My impression is, that the most equitable arrangement for both parties, is that which, in the event of the book meeting with the expected success, gives to each, nearly as may be, the same amount of profit.

I have often heard the question asked, of what number of copies does an edition of a work consist? There is no fixed number: the thing depends entirely on circumstances. There is, however, a kind of conventional understanding on the subject among the trade. What would

be considered a large edition of one book, would be considered a small one of another. For example; a thousand copies of any of the "Standard Novels," &c., which Mr. Colburn and Mr. Bentley are severally publishing, at five or six shillings each, would be considered a small edition; while the same number of copies of any of the works, when originally published in three volumes at a guinea and a-half, would have been considered a large edition. It is always assumed, that in proportion to the cheapness of a book, will be the extent of its sale; and *vice versa*. Of very expensive books, the edition often consists of only 250 copies. Five hundred copies of a work published at half-a-guinea, or seven shillings and sixpence a volume, are considered a small edition: 750 copies of such works are considered a fair edition. That indeed is the number usually printed of novels, and other works of fiction, except where the great popularity of the author is supposed likely to carry off a larger impression. One thousand copies of such works, or of any works published at or about the same price, and containing a corres-

ponding quantity of matter, are regarded as forming a large edition.

The public are sometimes deceived as to the number of editions a book goes through. In various instances, a new title-page is printed, with the words "Second Edition," or "Third Edition," as the case may be, on it, while in point of fact a dozen copies perhaps, of the work has never been sold. I knew an instance last year in which a second edition of a half-guinea work was advertised, while in reality only nine or ten copies were sold. The object in such cases is to give the work a character, by conveying to the public mind an idea that it is in extensive demand. It is right, however, to mention, that not only are the majority of the respectable publishers incapable of practising such an imposition on the public themselves, but they will not be parties to it by allowing authors to practise it who have published their works with them by commission. In those cases where the words "second," "third," "fourth" or other edition, are seen in the title-page of any work which emanates from a respectable house, the fair pre-

sumption is, that the number making fair editions has been sold.

It is curious to reflect on the nature of the popularity of different works. Some rise into notice in the course of a few days, and are quite popular for a fortnight or three weeks, but after that time are never seen or heard of; they fall into as great oblivion as if they had never been published. The vast majority of our novels are among this class of works. No one ever thinks of purchasing a copy of any of these works, two or three months after its publication. The publisher, indeed, knows that if he do not obtain a remunerating sale within five or six weeks after their appearance he has made a bad speculation. What copies remain on hand after that time he looks on as little better than waste paper. He would be glad to dispose of them at a sixth or seventh of the usual price, were it not that it would prove injurious to the sale of his other works.

Other works often take some time before they attain any degree of popularity; but when they

have done so, they usually retain it much longer. It is generally some time before works of a scientific, philosophical, or historical nature command a tolerable sale; but when they once get a hold on the public mind, they usually keep it for a length of time. The sale, however, even then, is seldom or never rapid; it is slow or gradual, but steady.

The history of literature and bookselling abounds with instances in which a work has fallen still-born from the press, and yet at some distance of time has been, by some accidental circumstance, restored from the dead, and become eventually a part of our standard literature. Milton's "Paradise Lost," as mentioned in my last chapter, is a case in point. It was wholly unknown until Addison, by his criticisms on it in the Spectator, brought its beauties before the public eye. Another striking instance of the same thing occurred in the case of Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield." It was, for some time after its appearance, so much literary lumber on the shelves of the bibliopole who

ushered it into existence. It dates its popularity from the accidental circumstance of Lord Chesterfield chancing to meet with it in the publisher's shop. His lordship was so struck with its merits, that he perseveringly recommended it to every person he met with, until it was fairly brought into notice. The only other instance I shall mention of the same thing, refers to a living author of great popularity. A good many years ago, he published a book in two octavo volumes, of an "Imaginary" kind, which was, perhaps, for some time, one of the most striking bibliopolic failures on record; for within twelve months of the publication of the work, only three copies were sold. At the end of that time it was brought into notice by an elaborate and commendatory critique in the "Edinburgh Review." Other periodicals followed the example of the Northern Leviathan, and eventually the book attained an extensive sale, and is now the groundwork of the author's reputation.

The expenses of printing books are pretty much the same in all the respectable typographical

establishments in the metropolis. The usual charge for the paper and printing of 1000 copies of such a work as the present varies from 6*l.* to 7*l.* per sheet. This, of course, is exclusive of corrections: if the author makes any alterations on the proof sheets, when the work is going through the press, he or the publisher is charged according to their number or importance. The price of such a quality of paper as that on which this work is printed varies from twenty-six to thirty shillings per ream. Printing and paper, however, are not the only expenses incurred in the publication of a book. One very important item in those expenses is that of advertising. Unless a book be extensively advertised, there is little chance of its selling to any extent, whatever may be its merits. If a book command a fair sale without much advertising, there must be something extremely attractive in it. Some publishers are of opinion, that it were to incur an unnecessary expenditure of money to advertise a book which sells well without advertising. This is an error; for it will always be found,

that if a book sell well without advertising, it would have twice the sale if liberally advertised. No book is done any degree of justice to if not advertised to the extent of at least 80*l.*; the sum usually expended by spirited publishers in advertising interesting books is about 100*l.* The best proof of the beneficial effects of advertising is to be found in the fact, that those houses which have once begun the practice of liberal advertising, invariably continue it. The amount of money which some of the larger houses expend in advertising their works in the course of the year, is little short of 5,000*l.*

A day or two before the publication of a work, some one connected with the house from which it emanates, goes round among the trade to show it them, and to receive, in a book kept for the purpose, the order for any number of copies which the various booksellers may be inclined to take. Messrs. Longman and Co. are always waited on first, as being the oldest established house in town. Messrs. Simpkin and Marshall, Messrs. Whittaker and Co., Messrs. Baldwin

and Cradock, Messrs. Sherwood and Co., Messrs. Hamilton and Co., Mr. James Duncan, and some other houses in the "Row," as Paternoster Row is always called, are then severally waited on. The number of copies which the different houses engage to take depends, of course, on the probable popularity of the book. Where the work is by an unknown author, the amount engaged for, or "subscribed," as it is technically called, is always small. It may be twenty-five, or fifty copies, according to the price and appearance of the book, and the nature of the subject. When, however, the new work is by a popular author, and is in the same walk of literature as that in which he has distinguished himself, the number subscribed is always large. Any new novel of Mr. Bulwer, for example, is sure to be ordered by the trade to a very great extent; perhaps to the extent of 1,500 or 1,800 copies. One of the largest subscriptions I have heard of for some years, of an expensive work, was that of one published in the winter of 1835. The number

ordered before the book was ready for delivery exceeded 2,000 copies. Paternoster Row is the great place on such occasions. Four or five copies of every book of importance are always sold there for every one in all the other parts of the metropolis put together. The large houses there supply the booksellers in other parts of the town, and the whole of the country, with every new book on the same terms as they would get it from the publishers, namely, at a reduction of twenty-five per cent. on the published price. The profit of the large houses in "the Row" arises from an allowance of five per cent. additional, which the publishers make them, coupled with the gift of one copy of the work for every twenty-five they order.

There is another way in which new works are sometimes disposed of to the trade. An extensive publisher who has several books in the press, or ready for publication, invites the leading men among the trade, by means of printed circulars, to a dinner sale, as it is called, in a particular hotel, on a given day. The works which are ready are shown, and the

names of the authors, the subject, the price, &c. of those which are not, are mentioned. Placed by an excellent dinner and an abundant supply of the choicest wines, in that happy frame of mind which leads one to look on the sunny side of the picture, it is no wonder if the merits of the arious works are sometimes a little magnified, and the probable amount of the demand for them somewhat exaggerated. The principal reason for this method, however, is the selling a large quantity of books at once; and they are therefore on such occasions offered on very advantageous terms to the trade. The trade then put down their names for copies to be delivered when ready. Mr. Murray, and many others, do a great deal of business in this way. Mr. Murray has one great dinner of the kind every year, at which there are sometimes from one hundred to one hundred and fifty of the leading men in the trade. In the spring of last year, he sold new works, in one day, to the amount of nearly 20,000*l.* at one of these dinner sales.

The publishers and booksellers in the metro-

polis are very numerous. Perhaps the former, including those who only occasionally publish a small work or two, are about fifty in number. The number of the trade altogether, that is, including both publishers and booksellers, is estimated by Mr. Babbage, in his "Economy of Manufactures," at 4,000. As a body they are men of great intelligence; but as there are exceptions to every rule, so among the smaller booksellers there are several individuals who are by no means remarkable for the extent of their literary knowledge. I could give some amusing instances in proof of their ignorance of books and of literary men. When one of Dr. Wolcott's volumes of poems which, as everybody knows, were represented on the title-page as being the productions of "Peter Pindar," was in the course of being subscribed, the publisher, on submitting the work to one of the smaller booksellers, was accosted by the latter in these terms, and in a tone of serious indignation which heightened the ludicrousness of the reproof—"I will take no copies of the

work; and you may rely on it, it never will sell. Mr. Pindar has been dead* for more than one or two thousand years: he is quite forgotten now, and I think it was very foolish of you to disturb the poor man's bones. I don't like that sort of resurrection-work, and will have nothing to do with the book." When the new edition of Mr. Peter Cunningham's (son of Allan Cunningham) "Poems of Drummond of Hawthornden," was being subscribed, one of the same class of booksellers to whom the volume was submitted inquired of the publisher, whether this Henry Drummond of Hawthornden was any relation of Henry Drummond the banker, adding, that if he was, he would take a couple of copies, as he was sure the private friends of the author would insure the sale of the book to a certain extent.

The observation of Shakspeare, that "there is a tide in the affairs of men," holds eminently true of authors. A name is everything to them.

* The bibliopole had heard something of the Peter Pindar of ancient Greece.

Once an author has got a name—if Juliet had been an author she would never have asked 'What's in a name?'—it is his own fault in most cases if he do not make his way in the world. A popular writer, if he wish it, may dispose of his manuscript works to a publisher without the latter even seeing them. This, indeed, is often done. Nay more, surprising as it may seem, an author sometimes sells a work and receives the price for it too, before he has written a line of it; before, indeed, it has any other existence than in his own head. Sir Walter Scott in his anxiety to get the means of carrying into effect his darling improvements at Abbotsford, often got large sums of money in advance, on projected works from Mr. Constable, before a single line of the intended work was written. Mr. Constable often anticipated Sir Walter's wishes in this respect. I saw a short time since a letter from that gentleman to the author of Waverley, in which, in reference to an observation of the latter, that he was employed in a work, to be in one volume, on

"Superstition and Witchcraft," Mr. Constable said, that if he thought 500*l.* was sufficient for the copyright he might draw on him for that amount whenever he pleased. I may mention one other instance. A work by a well-known author having been very successful, and the publisher having met him one day at Brighton, he made him a handsome douceur, making the whole price he gave for his work 750*l.* Mr. S., after expressing his grateful sense of the publisher's liberality, expressed a hope they should soon have another transaction together of a similar kind. The publisher responded to the hope, and said Mr. S. should have the same terms for anything else he wrote. The author and bibliopole shook hands, and bade each other good morning. Mr. S. wrote several other works of fiction, and received the same terms for them. In Mr. S.'s case I do not suppose there was any necessity to pay the money, or any part of it, in advance; but several instances have come to my

knowledge, in which other publishers have in this way advanced several hundred pounds to improvident authors. It is a decidedly bad practice, and is sure, in the end, to lead to unpleasant differences between the parties. Publishers should set their faces against it: they are generally sufferers by it: so is literature. A book is never written so well where the author has received his money in advance and spent it. He has no pleasure in his labour, any more than the common mechanic who is working for a person to whom he is in debt. So far from regarding his task as a labour of love, he feels himself, for the time being, the slave of the publisher. Falstaff would do nothing on compulsion: the author in such a case feels his labour is nothing but compulsion; and he feels he must perform it, however reluctantly.

To be a popular author is not so enviable a distinction as most persons imagine. It has its pleasures, undoubtedly; but these are mingled with a large proportion of pains and penalties.

I will not specify these: they are too numerous for that. Suffice it to say that the repeated applications made to him to assist obscure authors, who are very numerous, and for the most part very poor, are not among the least. Let one of these be only introduced to a writer of celebrity and have a ten minutes' conversation with him, and, not content with boasting among all his acquaintances that the popular author is his particular friend, it is a thousand to one if he do not next day apply to him either for his subscription to some forthcoming work, or for the use of his influence with some publisher to get the applicant's book "brought out." What is the "distinguished writer" to do in the latter,—which is a most common case? If he decline in the most polite terms he can employ, to recommend the work to any publisher, the applicant's pride is wounded—for the poorer and more obscure the party, the greater is sure to be his pride—and he may expect to be heartily abused. If he do speak to a publisher, and prevail on him to go to

press, he becomes to all intents and purposes guilty of aiding and abetting the would-be-author, to pick the unfortunate bibliopole's pocket. Here is a dilemma for you. It is one in which literary men of distinction find themselves placed every day of their lives. Happily, in the great majority of cases, they prefer the alternative of wounding the pride of the would-be-author, to that of becoming a party to an attempt on the pockets of the publisher. Did they act otherwise, the result would be equally disastrous to literature and to publishers. As it is, we have literary trash enough of all sorts and in all shapes, as everybody knows; and publishers are, for the most part, sufferers by their speculations to as great an extent as their worst enemies could wish: let authors of reputation only induce bibliopoles to publish all the works on whose behalf their services are solicited, and we should not only have a deluge of nonsense in the form both of poetry and prose, such as the world never dreamed of; but in a few years there would not remain one of the existing

race of publishers; all of them would be involved in one common ruin. The bitter experience of many a bibliopole will cause him to respond to me when I say, that there are at present various writers who have entailed a world of mischief on publishers by using the influence they possess in consequence of their popularity, to force pure nonsense in the shape of manuscript, from would-be-authors, down their throats. They do it thoughtlessly, to be sure; but the results are not on that account less injurious to the bibliopoles. I would not have the sins in this respect on my head, which some of our most celebrated writers have on theirs, for all the laurels which adorn their brows. But publishers are not, in such cases, the only parties injured: you commit, in most cases, an act of inhumanity towards the would-be-authors themselves. You seduce them, as I mentioned in my last chapter, from the occupations, whatever these may chance to be, by which they earned their bread; for, once give persons of this description reason to believe you think

them literary men, and there is no use of them afterwards. Ordinary labour is below their notice: they will not stoop to it. They must ever afterwards soar in the lofty regions of intellect; and nothing but the gravitating tendencies of poverty and neglect can bring them down again to the level of the earth. Thousands of young men have been ruined for ever in this way. He who would do a humane and friendly turn to a poor person applying to him for his influence to get his book published, will, except in very extraordinary circumstances, advise him at once to give up all ideas of literary distinction, and devote his attention to his calling in life, be that calling what it may. If a shoemaker, urge him by all means to stick to his last: if a tailor, —though I doubt if literary aspirations be compatible with tailorifics—implore him to think of nothing but his goose; or, at all events, let such persons be advised, as Sir Walter Scott always advised them, as mentioned in my last chapter, when they applied in such circumstances

to him,—to make literature only an amusement for their leisure hours, never trusting to it for their daily bread.

Authors are often the mere creatures of circumstances. The most purely accidental matters have frequently decided the fate of some of the greatest literary geniuses which have ever appeared. History abounds with instances of literary men dating their success to circumstances which in themselves were of the most trifling and unimportant kind. I will not refer to any of these; but I may mention one which was lately communicated to me by a gentleman who was personally privy to it. All the extensive publishers have one or more gentlemen—"literary men" they are technically called—to whom they submit the manuscripts of such works as they themselves deem likely to command a remunerating sale. Publishers generally form their own opinion as to the attractiveness or otherwise of the subjects of the works offered them for publication; but they have not time, even were they always disposed to trust to their own judgment,

to read the manuscript so carefully, as to form an opinion of the merit of the literary execution. This, then, is the province of the gentlemen I have referred to as being in the employment of all the respectable houses. In the instance to which I refer, the publisher had two literary men in his employ for the purpose of reading the manuscripts offered him for publication. Some years since, a gentleman well known in the fashionable and military world, and who had in addition the magical appendage of an M.P. to his name, called on the bibliopole and begged to introduce to him a young gentleman, his friend. After the usual civilities had been exchanged, the latter stated the object of his visit was to see whether he and the bibliopole could come to any arrangement regarding the publication of a work which he had almost ready. Knowing that the young gentleman belonged to a respectable family residing in St. James's Square, and hearing him warmly eulogised for his literary taste by the gallant M.P. who introduced him, the bibliopole undertook the publication of the

work, and to give 200*l.* to the author without even seeing the manuscript. This was certainly an adventurous step on the part of the publisher, where the work was the author's maiden production. The author being in want of money, the bibliopole drew out a bill at once for the amount. In about a fortnight afterwards, the manuscript was sent to the publisher and he handed it over to one of his literary men, with a request that he would read it carefully and state his opinion of it; but without mentioning that he had already bought and paid for it. The gentleman called on the publisher some days afterwards, when the latter asked him whether he had read the manuscript.

"I have gone through the first volume,"* said the literary gentleman.

"And what do you think of it?" said the bibliopole, eagerly. "Favourably, I have no doubt."

"The greatest trash, without exception, I ever read," said the other.

* The work was a fashionable novel in three volumes.

The vender of literature turned pale. He was quite confounded, and a few minutes elapsed before he was able to utter a word. "You don't mean to say it's *so* very bad," he at length stuttered out.

"It is, I assure you, the most consummate nonsense that ever soiled paper," observed the literary man.

The bibliopole rubbed his hands in an agony of mortification.

"But perhaps, though deficient in literary merit, it may display a knowledge of high life and consequently sell," he observed, after a momentary silence.

"A knowledge of high life!" exclaimed the other, making a wry face; "why, if we may judge from the style and sentiments of the work, the author knows no more about high life than if his occupation were to sweep the crossings."*

The bibliopole thrust his hands into his small-

* In order that the judgment of these literary men may be unbiassed, the publishers always conceal the name of the author of the manuscript.

clothes pockets, and made two or three hasty paces through the apartment.

"But you have not read the whole through: possibly if you finish the manuscript you may think better of it," said the patron of literature, as he loves to be considered.

"Read the whole through!" exclaimed the literary man, "why, I would not wade through the other two volumes for fifty pounds. It is, you may depend upon it, the most unadulterated nonsense that ever emanated from the human mind."

The bibliopole looked at a heap of papers which lay on the table, scratched his head, and then muttered out, "Well, bring me back the manuscript, if you please."

The literary man quitted the place, and the poor publisher was left to ruminate on the folly, as he now thought it, of buying a pig in a poke. He vowed in his own mind that he would never afterwards purchase any work of an unknown author, without first examining the manuscript. But what was to be done touching

the 200*l.*? The loss of the money haunted him like a spectre. While reproaching himself as the greatest fool in Christendom, his other "literary man" chanced to drop in. A thought struck the bibliopole. "Good morning, Mr. Thompson."

"Good morning, sir," responded the other.

"A gentleman has promised to send me the manuscript of a fashionable novel. Will you set to work and read it carefully through as soon as you can, and let me know your opinion of it."

"Certainly," said Mr. Thompson.

"I expect it here every minute," said the vender of literature. "I will send it to your house the moment it comes, as I am quite impatient to know what you think of it."

"It shall have my immediate and best attention," remarked Mr. Thompson.

The manuscript was forwarded to the latter, and carefully examined. His opinion of it was the very reverse of that of the other "literary man." He pronounced it the best work of fiction he had ever read, and assured the bibliopole he had

been entranced by it, and that it would create a great sensation among the higher classes, with whose habits the author manifested a most intimate acquaintance.

The patron of literature was now thrown into a state of utter perplexity. "Who shall decide when doctors differ?" was a remark he had often heard before, but the full force of which he had never until now experienced in his own person. To lose his 200*l.* was an evil of no ordinary magnitude; but it would have been a less evil than the loss of 500*l.* or 600*l.* by printing and advertising a book which would not sell. If, therefore, both his "literary men" had concurred in condemning the work, he would have consented to the loss of his 200*l.*, on the principle of choosing the least of two evils. Here, however, their opinions as to the merits of the book were the very antipodes of each other. If the judgment of the first literary man were correct, the loss incurred by the publication would be enormous; if that of the other were sound, the bibliopole must make a little fortune by the

work. To what decision, then, was the perplexed publisher to come? He waddled through the room, knit his brow, and heaved two or three broken sighs, as he thought of the dilemma in which he was placed. He had often experienced the sorrows of a publisher before; but here were sorrows of a new class, or, to use his own words, a "new series." He thought with himself that if the unknown poet who begins his touching lines, "Pity the sorrows of a poor old man!" had been alive at the time, and been aware of his distressing perplexity, he would have made it—"Pity the sorrows of a bibliopole!" While in this pitiable state, an acquaintance of mine who was in the confidence of the publisher, chanced to call on him. "O, Mr. Thomas, I'm so glad you're come!" he exclaimed as the other entered his room.

"What's the matter?" said the latter.

"O these two rascals of readers! (another of his terms,) what a couple of vagabonds they are!" he answered.

"What have they done?" inquired Mr. Thomas.

"Why, the one pronounces a fashionable novel I have given him to read to be the most arrant trash ever penned, and says the author knows nothing of fashionable life; while the other represents the work as the best he ever read, and says the writer displays a most intimate acquaintance with the habits of the higher classes."

"Well, that is differing with a vengeance, certainly!" said Mr. Thomas.

"It is, indeed," observed the literary merchant; "and what am I to do between the two rogues?"

"Stop a moment," said Mr. Thomas, putting his hand to his head, and looking thoughtfully. "Stop a moment! I think I know how you may decide at-once as to whose judgment is to be relied on."

"By what means can I decide the point?" said the bibliopole eagerly, his little countenance brightening up as he spoke.

"Of course you know the author?" said Mr. Thomas.

"O yes, certainly," replied the perplexed publisher.

"Then you must know whether he be a man accustomed to move in the higher circles of society; and as the one literary man affirms that he knows nothing of the manners of the upper classes, while the other says he evinces a most intimate acquaintance with fashionable life, the fair presumption is that the one who is right as to that point, is also right as to the literary merits of the work."

"Bless me! I never thought of that," said the publisher, overjoyed at the discovery of Mr. Thomas, and amazed at his own stupidity in not having made it himself.

The literary man who pronounced the work to be one of transcendent merit, having been the party who expressed his conviction that the writer was in the habit of mixing with the upper classes of society, the bibliopole, of course, at once determined on publication. The work ap-

peared; it made a great noise, and the author is now one of the most popular writers of the day.

In this anecdote we have a remarkable proof of the position for the illustration of which I have told it; the position, namely, that circumstances, purely accidental, and of the most trifling nature in themselves, are often decisive of the fate of authors. But for the accidental circumstance of the writer having got the 200*l.* before the manuscript was read by the bibliopole's literary man, the work would most certainly have been rejected; for the publisher would never have dreamed in that case, of asking the opinion of the second "reader." And as the bibliopole in question chanced to be at that time the only publisher of fashionable novels, the probability is that it would never have been published at all, and the author might therefore have abjured literature entirely and for ever.

Another singularly striking illustration of the influence which accidental circumstances of the most trivial nature, have on the fortunes of

authors, occurred in the case of Sir Walter Scott. His "Waverley" having been represented as not likely to sell by a party to whom it was submitted, it had lain five years in manuscript in a drawer, quite forgotten by him; and it was not until he one day stumbled on it, while looking for some fishing-tackle, that the idea of trying to get a publisher for it occurred to him. But for the trifling circumstance of Sir Walter, then Mr. Scott, having resolved on going out to fish on a certain day, the probability is his name would never have been heard of as a novelist; he had never published a page of that splendid series of works of fiction which has afforded so much intellectual enjoyment to the world. That many other distinguished literary geniuses have been lost to mankind through accidental circumstances preventing their being fairly brought before the public, is a fact of which no doubt can be entertained.

It is a curious reflection, but an undoubted truth, that so different is the mental temperament of different individuals, that what would for ever

crush one's aspirations as an author, is the very thing which would call forth another's latent powers in all their force. Had some authors been treated, on the appearance of their maiden production as Byron was by the "Edinburgh Review," they would have shrunk from the very idea of any future publication; whereas, the furious attack in question was the very thing which called into full exercise the gigantic powers of that extraordinary genius. Had the "Edinburgh Review" allowed "The Hours of Idleness" to pass unnoticed, the probability was, the little work would have sunk into oblivion, and Byron might never have made a second attempt at authorship.

There are two or three houses in the publishing trade which, in their dealings with authors, afford a remarkable illustration of Pope's celebrated couplet—

> "'Tis from high life, high characters are drawn;
> A saint in crape, is twice a saint in lawn."

The houses to which I refer evince a marked predilection for the writings of noblemen and

persons of title. One of our Annuals, a few years since, prided itself on the circumstance of almost all its articles being written by individuals of rank,—just as if rank and talent were synonymous terms. The fortunes of the Annual in question rectified this erroneous impression; and the houses to which I refer have also learned from experience that a high status in society and a high status in literature are very different things. One publisher was, some years since, provokingly tantalised by a noble author, as well as doomed to be a serious sufferer in purse by his confounding literary merit with exalted rank. Lord Orton called one day on an enterprising bibliopole, and was shown into the sanctum of the latter. "I have come, Mr. Monthly, to see if we can make any arrangement about a book I mean to publish," said his lordship.

The little countenance of the bibliopole brightened up at the very idea of "having the honour to usher into the world," as he used afterwards to say in his advertisements of the book, a work by a nobleman.

"I shall be most happy to be your publisher, my lord," said the patron of literature.

"But you have not heard the subject yet, Mr. Monthly," said the noble lord.

"No matter what subject, my lord," answered Mr. Monthly; "anything from your pen and with your name is sure to take."

"You flatter me," observed his lordship.

"Not at all, I assure your lordship," said Mr. Monthly, making one of his own peculiar bows, and moving both his arms and both his feet at the same time.

"The subject is the late war."

"My lord," exclaimed Mr. Monthly, almost leaping off his feet in the ardour of his congratulations of the noble author at his choice of a subject; "My lord, it is an excellent subject—there could not be a better: it is the best in the world."

"But I expect a very large sum for the manuscript, Mr. Monthly."

"My lord, I shall have the greatest pleasure,

I assure your lordship, in giving you any reasonable sum," said the bibliopole.

"The work will be in two large octavo volumes, and I expect 1,500*l.* for the copyright."

"Fifteen hundred pounds! my lord," exclaimed Mr. Monthly, in a subdued tone, and with an altered expression of countenance, "Fifteen hundred pounds! That is a large sum, my lord; but," he continued, after a moment's hesitation, "but you shall have it, as I doubt not the work, with your lordship's name on the title-page, will have a large sale."

"Then I'll send my solicitor here to-morrow, to draw up a written agreement," said his lordship.

"Very good, my lord, I shall be happy to see him."

"Good morning, Mr. Monthly," said his lordship, as he quitted the sanctum.

"I wish your Lordship a very good morning," said the bibliopole, making one of his lowest and best bows.

Next day his lordship's solicitor called on the

publisher and got the agreement duly ratified. Mr. Monthly having first signed the paper, and then put his bills for the 1,500*l.* into the legal gentleman's hand, said, "Now, sir, perhaps you will favour me with his lordship's manuscript, that we may go to press directly."

"The manuscript!" exclaimed the solicitor, with infinite amazement. "The manuscript! why, did not his lordship tell you that he had not yet put pen to paper?"

Mr. Monthly turned as pale as the unsoiled margin of his own books, and with difficulty resisted an undefinable tendency to fall back in the chair from which he had just arisen to pay his respects to his lordship's man of business.

"I understood," said the disappointed bibliopole, as soon as he was competent to the utterance of a syllable, "I understood the manuscript was quite ready."

"That is a slight mistake," said the man of law. "It is all, as yet, snug enough in his lordship's head."

"This is a very awkward affair, sir," said Mr. Monthly. "This is a grievous disappointment to me, sir," he added.

"Well, the only thing that can be now done, I suppose, will be to spur his lordship on as much as possible."

"But how long may he take to finish it?" inquired the bibliopole.

"That I cannot say," answered the solicitor.

Mr. Monthly scratched his head, and lifted up and threw down again two or three proof-sheets which lay on the table.

"I shall tell his Lordship you are very anxious about the manuscript," said the solicitor, taking up his hat in his hand.

"I beg—I beg you will, sir; very impatient about it, indeed, sir," remarked Mr. Monthly.

"Good morning," said the legal gentleman, as he quitted the place.

Mr. Monthly was so overcome with disappointment and mortification, that it was with difficulty he muttered out a "good morning" in return.

Next day a note was sent to Mr. Monthly from the embryo noble author, requesting that he would send him all the works he had on the late war. The note was delivered by a friend of the noble lord who, it was stated, would wait for an answer.

"What! What! What's the meaning of this?" said the bibliopole, his face colouring as he read the letter.

"His lordship wants all the works you have got on the war," answered the bearer of the letter.

"I have not got a single volume on the subject. I never published anything on the subject," said Mr. Monthly, in hurried, half-pronounced accents.

"Well, then, you must get them from some one else," said the other, with provoking coolness.

"What does his lordship mean to do with them?" inquired the confounded bibliopole, eagerly.

"Why to write his book, to be sure!" was the reply.

I shall not attempt to describe "the confusion

worse confounded" which followed. Mr. Monthly had expected the volumes were to consist entirely of the author's own personal observations and official documents.

However, the bargain was made and the money had been paid, and he could not now help himself. It was a bad bargain, and as the proverb says, he felt he "must now make the best of it." He had committed a greater folly than that of buying a pig in a poke; he had bought the pig before it was in a poke, or anywhere else—before it had an existence,—unless, indeed, it could be said to have existed in the noble author's head.

Mr. Monthly accordingly collected all the books he could find on the subject of the war, and sent them up in a truck to the noble author's residence in May Fair. The noble lord handed them over, with all the official documents in his possession, together with some personal reminiscences, to a literary friend, and desired him to write the book. It was six months, however, before this was done; and several other

works having in the interim appeared on the subject, taken in conjunction with the specific gravity, as a chemist would say, of the work itself, it was such a decided failure that Mr. Monthly would have been a considerable loser by it, even though, instead of giving 1,500*l.* for the copyright, he had got it for nothing.

As still further illustrating the position with which I set out, namely, the importance which one or two publishers attach to the author's station in society, I may mention that, much about the same time as that at which the above transaction with the noble lord took place, a person called on the same publisher with a great quantity of manuscript, consisting of anecdotes of the most celebrated wits of the latter part of the last and beginning of the present century. The manuscript was carried in to the bibliopole, who was in his sanctum, by a friend with whom he used to advise on such matters,—while the author who had brought it stood in the front premises. Mr. Monthly glanced it over, and saw at once that it was admirably adapted for a periodical

in whose destinies he was deeply interested. "What does he ask for it?" said the bibliopole to his friend.

"He has not named his price, but I have no doubt from his appearance that he would be glad to take twenty pounds," was the answer.

"Oh, he is a poor fellow, is he?" inquired Mr. Monthly, eagerly, at the same time rising and taking a glance at the party through a small loop-hole in the partition.

"He is evidently hard up," said the other.

"Oh, that poor fellow will be glad to take anything he can get; try him with 2*l.*," said the bibliopole, as he withdrew his eye from the loop-hole.

Two pounds were offered the poor fellow. He stated it was a great deal too little; but after hesitating for a moment or two, he said he must take it.

Authors may learn an important lesson from this anecdote, which is only one among many others of a similar kind I could tell. That lesson is, the importance of having, if possible, a good

coat on their backs when about to negotiate with some publisher for the sale of their literary works. I would advise authors, in such circumstances, who may not happen to have a good coat of their own, not certainly to steal one, but by all means to beg or borrow so useful an article before making their appearance in the sanctum of a publisher.

Some of the leading publishers often act on a principle which is injudicious for themselves and injurious to literature. I allude to the practice which is common to several respectable houses, of accepting the manuscript of an author, when they are perfectly convinced in their own minds that there is no probability whatever of the work commanding a sale which will do more than pay the expenses. In many such cases they, as might be expected, over-estimate rather than under-estimate the sale of the work, and are consequently losers to the extent to which the sale falls short of their expectations. But even where their expectations are realised, and the work barely pays the expenses, they are indi-

rectly losers by the speculation. Such works, however limited their sale, withdraw in a greater or less degree the public attention from books of real merit, and lessen the demand for them. The wisest course, therefore, for publishers to pursue, even regarding the question as one of mere business only, would be, never to undertake the publication of works for which they do not anticipate such a sale as will yield themselves a fair remuneration. By this means they would be enabled to pay more attention to those works of merit which hold out the prospect of a liberal sale and reasonable profits; and thus, by pushing the sale of such books, they would, in that proportion, be adding to their own profits. It is true, that a publisher may form an exaggerated estimate of the merits of a work, and of its consequent sale. To such cases my observations do not apply; they apply only in those instances in which a house undertakes the publication of a work, with the full persuasion on their own minds that it will barely pay its expenses. How

far literature suffers from this practice, I will not take upon me to say.

There is another error into which I think some of the leading publishing houses fall. It is an error which arises from a spirit of misdirected rivalry, and entails suffering on all parties. My allusion is to the practice which has been so common of late years among the leading houses, of bringing out important works as nearly as they can about the same time. If one house sees a rival establishment announce a work which promises to be popular, at a given time, such house very often makes a point of either delaying or accelerating, according to circumstances, some important work of which it may have undertaken the publication,—so as that it may appear about the same time as the other. I have often known three, sometimes four, interesting works brought out within a few days of each other, solely from this spirit of rivalry. The consequence is, that the public attention being distracted between

them, they all suffer to a greater or less extent; whereas, if an interval of a few weeks had taken place in the publication, the public attention could have been exclusively given for a short time to each, and thus greatly increased the sale of all. I say nothing of the extent to which literature suffers from this injudicious rivalry among publishers; because that, strictly speaking, is no matter for their consideration. I put the question wholly on the broad ground of business. I may be told that the number of books which are published in the course of a year is so great that two or three, from rival houses, must necessarily appear more or less frequently at a time. In answer to this, let me remark, that my observations do not apply to books taken in the mass; they have a reference only to works whose interest and popularity are in some degree guaranteed by the name of the author; and these assuredly are not so numerous that an interval of two or three weeks could not be suffered to pass, by a little arrangement, between their respective publica-

tions. I would throw it out as a suggestion to publishers, whether it would not be advisable, viewed merely as a matter affecting their own pecuniary interests, to come to some understanding with each other on the subject.

CHAPTER V.

BANK OF ENGLAND.

Historical sketch of the Bank—Its capital—Sources of its profits, &c.—Bank notes—Forgeries on the Bank—Dividends on stock—Recent alterations in the charter—Miscellaneous observations.

The Bank of England, from the great influence it exerts on the monetary system of the country, is at all times a subject of deep importance to the community. At the present moment it is peculiarly so. The parliamentary investigation, a few years since, into the extent of its resources and the manner in which it manages its affairs, in conjunction with the existing crisis in the money-market, conspire to invest it with

a degree of importance it never before possessed.

In order that a subject of such commanding interest to all classes of the community may be properly understood, I shall briefly advert to the origin, constitution, history, and present position of the great establishment in Threadneedle-street.

The individual who projected the Bank of England was Mr. William Paterson, a native of Dumfries-shire. In planning the establishment, he was materially assisted by Mr. Michael Godfrey, an intelligent and respectable merchant in London. The object of the institution was, to use the projector's own words, "to save the ministerial people the disgrace of stooping so frequently to solicitations to the London Common Council, for the borrowing of only 100,000*l.* or 200,000*l.* upon the credit of the land-tax, as the common-councilmen did to the private inhabitants of their wards, going from house to house for the loan of money." It is not known when the idea of the Bank of England first occurred to Mr. Paterson; but it

was not until after repeated applications for the sanction of government, and much discussion in the privy-council on the subject, that a charter was obtained. This was in 1693. The charter was limited to eleven years' duration, after which it was to cease and determine on twelve months' notice. The charter was obtained in consideration of the company advancing a loan to government, of 1,200,000*l.* The interest on this loan was fixed at eight per cent., with an additional allowance of 4,000*l.* per annum in lieu of expenses incurred in apportioning the interest among the subscribers. The charter prohibits the company borrowing under their common seal, unless with the special sanction of parliament; "nor are they to trade or suffer any person to trade for them in any goods or merchandise." The company, however, were authorised to deal in bills of exchange, in buying or selling bullion, in foreign gold and silver coin, &c.

Such are the circumstances under which the Bank of England originated.

The charter appoints that the management be vested in a governor, deputy-governor, and twenty-four directors, all of whom are to be elected by the proprietors possessing the requisite qualifications to vote. The possession of stock to the amount of 4,000*l.* is necessary to being chosen governor; 3,000*l.* to being chosen deputy-governor; 2,000*l.* to acting as director; while those only are eligible to vote in either of these cases who are shareholders to the amount of 500*l.*

By an act of the legislature passed in the eighth and ninth of William and Mary, the company were authorised to enlarge their capital stock to the extent of an additional 1,100,171*l.* 10*s.*; making their entire capital 2,201,171*l.* 10*s.* The interest on the additional capital was also fixed at eight per cent. It was at the same time enacted, that bank stock should be a personal and not a real estate; that no contract, either verbal or written, for buying or selling bank stock, should be legal, unless registered in

the books of the establishment within seven days of the transaction, and the stock had been duly transferred within fourteen days; and that it should be felony without benefit of clergy to counterfeit the common seal of the bank, or any sealed bank bill, or any bank-note, or to alter or erase such bills or notes. About the same time the charter was extended till the 1st of August, 1710.

In the seventh of Queen Anne, 1708, parliament empowered the Bank to double its capital stock; for which favour it made a further advance to government of 400,000*l.* without interest: thereby reducing the interest on the whole to six per cent. In return for this liberality, parliament further extended the charter to the 1st August, 1732. In 1714, the Bank made an additional advance to government to the extent of 1,500,000*l.* This last loan was most probably made in consideration of a still further extension of the charter to the 1st of August 1742, at this time agreed on by the legislature. At every new extension of the charter it was distinctly

specified that it would be terminable at the expiry of a specific period, on twelve months' notice.

The Bank agreed in 1717 to cancel 2,000,000*l.* of exchequer bills, accepting in return an annuity of 100,000*l.* The total advances now made to the state were, 5,375,027*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.* To enable the Bank to make these advances, the directors were empowered to call from the subscribers, in proportion to the amount of their respective shares, such sums of money as in a general court should be deemed necessary. The penalty of non-compliance, on the part of the proprietors was, in the first instance, stopping the dividend of such persons, and the applying it to the payment of the money in question; and if the requisite advance was not made in three months, then the directors could sell such person's share to make up the amount required. The interest on the last loan of 2,000,000*l.* was afterwards reduced to four per cent.

In 1727, another act of parliament was passed authorising the Bank to purchase stock of the

South Sea Company to the extent of 4,000,000*l.* The interest on this sum was, in the first instance, five per cent., but in 1729 it was reduced to four per cent. To enable the Bank to effect this purchase, 4,400,000*l.* were allowed to be added to its capital stock, making the total advances it had made to government 9,375,027*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.* while its undivided capital only amounted to 8,659,995*l.* 12*s.* 8*d.* This was the first occasion on which the Bank received interest from the public for a sum above its capital, and it has continued to do so, as will be afterwards seen, ever since.

In 1738, the Bank made another advance to government to the extent of 1,750,000*l.* The interest agreed on was four per cent. No consideration in return for the favour was made by government, either in the way of empowering the Bank to add to its capital, or by a further extension of its charter. In the year following, a yet further loan of 1,251,100*l.* was made to government at the same rate of interest as the preceding.

An act was passed in 1746 authorising the funding of exchequer-bills, issued in anticipation of the duty on licences for retailing spirituous liquors, to the amount of 986,800*l.* The rate of interest was four per cent. per annum. The Bank was at the same time empowered to increase its capital to the extent of ten per cent. The total amount of the advances now made to the state was, 11,686,800*l.*; while the undivided capital of the Bank was only 10,780,000*l.*; 3,200,000*l.* of the entire sum advanced to government now bore the reduced rate of interest of three per cent.: the remainder bore four per cent.

From this time until 1764 there was no further alteration in the terms of the charter, or in the Bank's accounts with the government; but in that year, agreeably to act of parliament, the Bank advanced 1,000,000*l.* for a term of years without interest, and also gave a bonus of 110,000*l.* to the exchequer, on condition of a further extension of the charter to the 1st of August 1786.

In 1781, the charter was again extended to August 1, 1802; on which occasion the Bank made another advance to government of 2,000,000*l.* at three per cent. interest. That it might be enabled to make this advance without any serious inconvenience to itself, it was empowered to increase its capital stock 862,400*l.*

Another extension of the charter to the 1st August 1834, was conceded to the Bank in 1800, as a ministerial expression of gratitude for an advance of 3,000,000*l.* in exchequer bills, the bills to be discharged without interest in 1806.

In 1816, a further advance of 3,000,000*l.* was made by the Bank to government; and in 1823 the Bank bound itself to advance the state the enormous sum of 13,089,419*l.* in thirteen irregular instalments, between the 5th April of that year, and the 6th July, 1828. The return for this was to be an annuity of 585,740*l.*, terminable at the end of forty-four years, from 1823. This is what is called the "dead weight

account." The entire amount of debt due by the state to the Bank at the expiry of the last charter was 14,553,000.*

So much for the gradual augmentation of the capital stock of the Bank, and the several advances it has made to the government. Its peculiar privileges are generally known. One of the most important of these is, that it has the sole right of issuing paper in London. Consequently, all other banking establishments in the metropolis must carry on their business with its notes. And in order still more effectually to protect the Bank from even the semblance of rivalry in the country as well as in town, an act was passed at an early period prohibiting all and every banking company within sixty-five miles of London from consisting of more than six partners; while no banking establishment in England can draw bills on London, or make its notes payable there, for less than 50*l.*

The Bank of England has, on several occa-

* It will be afterwards seen that a fourth part of this sum has been since repaid by government.

sions, been threatened with ruin from a want of public confidence in its stability. So early in its history as 1696, its tallies were at a discount of twenty to forty per cent. against its sealed notes, while the latter were at a discount of twenty per cent. against the standard coin of the country. The Bank was then saved from ruin, as it has been in more recent times, only by the interposition of government. At the time of the rebellion of 1745 it had to undergo another severe ordeal. A run was then made on it, and in order to gain time it resorted to the device of paying in shillings and sixpences. The retreat of the rebels and the interference of the merchants in London on its behalf, soon restored confidence.

But a more remarkable era in the history of the Bank was that of 1797. The progress of the French revolution, together with the then commercial position of our own country, seriously affected public credit; and the consequence was an unprecedented run on the Bank. That run was so great, and the quantity of gold

in the coffers of the establishment was so limited as to cause the greatest alarm in the minds of the directors. They clearly saw that if the demand for gold continued but for a few days longer — and it was then daily increasing — bankruptcy must be the inevitable consequence. They communicated their apprehensions to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Government saw that the ruin of the Bank would of necessity be attended by the immediate destruction of public credit. What was to be done? There was no time for deliberation. Nothing but an instant suspension of cash payments could save the Bank or the nation. The remedy was a desperate one, but there was no other. Accordingly, on Sunday the 20th of February, an order in council was issued prohibiting the Bank from any longer paying in specie, until the sense of the legislature could be obtained on the subject. The subject was immediately brought before parliament, and the resolution of that body, including both Houses, was confirmatory of the expedient resorted to by the

privy-council. This was what is called the Bank Restriction Act, which continued in force until the bringing in of Peel's bill in 1819. Of the narrow escape the Bank had at the period in question some idea may be formed from the fact, that two days before the Restriction Act was passed, the whole amount of gold in its coffers was only 1,272,000*l.*, while its notes in circulation exceeded 8,640,000*l.* By the time the order in council was issued it is supposed the specie in the Bank could not have been more than 100,000*l.* or 200,000*l.* The alarm and consternation which followed the Restriction Act baffles all efforts at description.

The Bank was again on the verge of ruin in December 1825. With the circumstances connected with that frightful commercial crisis, most of my readers must be familiar. The run for gold which then took place continued for ten days, and so nearly were the coffers of the Bank being drained, that when confidence began to return, its exchequer did not contain 1,000,000*l.* in specie. It is a striking fact,

and one which ought to be made use of by the public, that while the gold in the coffers of the Bank did not thus amount to 1,000,000*l.*, its obligations to the country, in the shape of notes alone, exceeded 20,000,000*l.* It was admitted by some of the leading directors themselves, in their late examination before a committee of the Commons, that the stability of the Bank, at the period in question, appeared to be at least "suspicious." One of the then leading ministers of the crown spoke on the subject in yet more decided terms. He declared, in his place in parliament, that on the 18th December, the day on which confidence began to be restored, the country was within twenty-four hours of barter.

The profits of the Bank of England are derived from a variety of sources. The profits for the year ending February 1832,* and the principal sources whence derived, are as follows:— Interest on commercial bills, 130,695*l.* — in-

* This is down to the latest period which I have access to official information.

terest on exchequer bills, 204,169*l.*—annuity for forty-five years, (the "dead-weight account,") 451,415*l.*—interest on capital in the hands of government, 446,502*l.*—allowance for management of the national debt, 251,896*l.*—interest on loans on mortgages, 60,684*l.*—interest on the stock in the funds, 15,075*l.*—interest on private loans, 56,941*l.*—and lastly, profits on bullion, commission, rent, receipts on discounted bills unpaid, management of the business of the banks of Ireland, of Scotland, &c. &c., 71,859*l.*, making the total amount of its profits for the year ending February 1832, 1,689,176*l.*

The expenditure during the same period was: Salaries and pensions, 218,003*l.*—losses by forgeries and bankruptcies, 89,274*l.*—house expenses, 39,274*l.*—rent, 40,000*l.*—sundry allowances, 8,000*l.*—expenses at eleven branches arising from the banking department, 5,702*l.*—expenses attending the circulation of 2,000,000*l.* of the eleven branch Bank of England notes, 28,508*l.*—payment for stamp duties, 70,875*l.*, making the entire charges to be set off against

the above income, 499,549*l.*, and consequently making the net profit during the year, to be 1,189,627*l.* Of this sum, 1,164,235*l.* was divided among the proprietors at the rate of 8 per cent.; the balance of 25,392*l.* being carried to what is technically termed the "rest" account, in augmentation of their surplus profits. This "rest" amounted at the end of 1836 to 2,825,000*l.*

One source of the profits of the Bank has of late years comparatively dried up. I allude to that derived from the deposits made by government. What the amount of these was during the war, and what it has been since the peace, will be seen from the following tabular view of the balance of the public money in the hands of the Bank, from 1807 to 1831, viz.:—

	£.		£.		£.
1807	12,647,551	1816	10,807,660	1824	7,222,187
1808	11,761,448	1817	8,699,133	1825	5,347,314
1809	11,093,648	1818	7,066,887	1826	4,214,271
1810	11,950,047	1819	4,538,373	1827	4,225,867
1811	10,191,854	1820	3,713,442	1828	3,821,697
1812	10,390,130	1821	3,920,157	1829	3,862,686
1813	10,393,404	1822	4,107,853	1830	4,761,952
1814	12,158,227	1823	5,526,655	1831	3,948,102
1815	11,787,486				

The amount of deposits from private individuals during the same period, were as follows:—

	£.		£.		£.
1807	1,582,720	1816	1,333,120	1824	2,369,910
1808	1,940,630	1817	1,672,800	1825	2,607,900
1809	1,492,190	1818	1,640,310	1826	3,322,370
1810	1,428,720	1819	1,790,860	1827	3,931,870
1811	1,577,920	1820	1,325,060	1828	5,701,280
1812	1,573,950	1821	1,326,020	1829	5,217,210
1813	1,771,310	1822	1,373,370	1830	5,562,250
1814	2,374 910	1823	2,321,920	1831	5,201,370
1815	1,690,490				

It will be seen from these tables that while the deposits of government have so materially decreased during the above period, those of private individuals have greatly augmented. On the deposits thus made with the Bank no interest is allowed.

From parliamentary documents recently published, I am enabled to give the following statement of the issues of the Bank, in notes and bank post bills, for upwards of a century past. It is of importance to premise, that the

amount of bank post bills is not above a twelfth of that of the notes.

	£.		£.		£.
1718	1,829,936	1803	16,847,522	1815	27,319,410
1730	4,224,990	1804	17,845,020	1816	26,594,360
1754	3,975,870	1805	17,226,932	1817	28,274,000
1763	6,889,680	1806	17,135,400	1818	27,220,000
1772	6,301,030	1807	17,405,001	1819	24,810,380
1783	6,707,540	1808	17,534,580	1820	24,220,770
1792	11,102,855	1809	19,001,890	1821	23,001,597
1797	11,191,720	1810	22,730,285	1822	18,142,470
1798	13,334,752	1811	23,547,525	1823	18,189,450
1799	14,062,387	1812	23,462,120	1824	19,736,686
1800	15,041,932	1813	24,087,000	1825	21,060,155
1801	16,169,594	1814	27,840,780	1826	23,673,737
1802	17,054,454				

The average amount of coin and bullion in the coffers of the Bank from 1815 to 1832, will be seen from the subjoined table. The disparity between the amount of specie in the exchequer of the Bank, and that of its notes in circulation, cannot fail to strike the reader.

	£.		£.		£.
1815	2,179,147	1821	8,174,419	1827	6,607,976
1816	3,399,114	1822	11,631,090	1828	10,201,253
1817	7,504,284	1823	10,254,698	1829	9,640,000
1818	11,109,381	1824	12,606,963	1830	7,285,000
1819	6,721,647	1825	11,858,595	1831	10,322,000
1820	3,969,528	1826	4,521,702		

It is of importance to observe that the above table only exhibits the average amount of gold in the Bank during the years which are mentioned. In the course of a very short period the fluctuation in its specie is often very great. For example, it will be seen, that in one part of 1825 the amount of gold in the possession of the Bank was as much as 11,858,559*l.*, while towards the close of the year it was, as before stated, reduced to less than 1,000,000*l.*

The position of the Bank at the commencement of 1832,* will be easily understood from the following statement:—

		£.
Exchequer bills		6,834,940
Amount advanced to government towards "dead-weight"		10,897,880
In return the Bank is entitled to receive from government annually till 1867 .		585,740
Government 3 per cent. stock purchased by the Bank		764,000
The bank holds of government 3 per cent. stock . . .	14,686,800	
While there is due by the Bank to its proprietors, only .	14,553,000	
Leaving a surplus of .		133,800

* I shall afterwards refer to its position at the present time.

Brought forward	
City bonds	500,000
Mercantile bills and notes under discount .	2,951,970
Lent on mortgages	1,452,100
Lent to the London Dock Company . .	227,500
Advanced on various securities . . .	579,690
Coin and bullion in bank	5,293,150
Total of disposable assets . . .	29,626,030

Responsibilities of the Bank at the same period.

Bank notes in circulation	18,051,710
Ditto, deposited in the Bank by government	2,034,790
Ditto, by bankers and other individuals .	5,738,400
Due to government for balance of Audit Roll Exchequer bills deposited, and unpaid annuities	1,163,940
Surplus in favour of the Bank . . .	2,637,160
	£. 29,626,030

I have mentioned in a previous part of the chapter the principal sources of the profits of the Bank. Another, though a very trifling one, is in the destruction of its notes by accident or otherwise.* It is also worthy of mention that

* The value of notes lost or destroyed may be recovered from the Bank, twelve months after notice, on giving a description of the numbers and dates on affidavit and an approved indemnity.

the Bank derives a small profit—though a very small one—through the eccentricities of some of the parties who hold its bank post bills. It is not long ago since an eccentric gentleman residing in Portland Street framed and exhibited in one of the apartments of his house, for five consecutive years, a bank post bill for 30,000*l*. It was only taken down and converted into money by his heirs, when he himself had crossed the well-known bourne of Shakspeare. It may at first sight appear strange that he should thus have exposed to the risk of being stolen an instrument representing so much money. But the fact was, that the circumstance of its being so exhibited was well known at the Bank, and any person, other than himself, presenting it in Threadneedle Street, would have been immediately pounced upon as a thief. Another bank post bill, from the concealment of which the Bank derived no inconsiderable profit, was discovered some years ago under very singular circumstances. In a house looking into Hyde Park, and now the town residence of a ce[c-

brated noble lord, a dispute chanced to occur one evening among a party of noblemen and gentlemen, respecting the meaning of a certain passage of Scripture. One of the party, repeating the passage, asked its meaning of a Dean of the Church of England who happened to be present. The clergyman, who had devoted fully as much of his time to the gaieties of the world as he did to the study of the scriptures, said there was no such passage in the Bible. A second difference of opinion among the party arose on this point, when the gentleman who introduced the subject said that if a Bible were given him he would at once point out the passage in one of the historical books of the Old Testament. The Bible which chanced to be nearest at the time was a quarto one which the mother of Lord R———, in whose house the party were, had been in the habit of daily reading, but which had been laid among other old religious books on a shelf out of the way, and had not been opened since her death some years before. On the sacred volume being opened, a piece of

paper was found in it which, on examination, turned out to be a bank post bill to the amount of 40,000*l.* These bank post bills, when paid at the Bank, are cancelled by the signature being torn off, and deposited in one of the apartments of the establishment appropriated for the custody of such instruments. The amount of money which some bank post bills represent may be inferred from the fact, that the author of "The American in England" states that when he visited the Bank in 1835, one of the servants put into his hand bank post bills which a short time before had represented the immense sum of five millions sterling. A friend of my own had shown to him, some years ago, when in the leviathan establishment in Threadneedle Street, 3,500,000*l.* in bank post bills; and, so limited was their bulk, that he put them all, with the greatest ease, into his waistcoat pocket.

The largest amount of a bank note in current circulation is for 1000*l.* But it is said, though I cannot pledge myself for the accuracy of the statement, that some time ago two notes

for 100,000*l.* each, and other two for 50,000*l.* each, were engraved and issued. It is added, that a plain butcher who had amassed an immense fortune in the time of the war, went one day with one of the 50,000*l.* notes to a private banking establishment, and asking the loan of 5,000*l.*, proposed depositing the note in the banker's hands as security; adding he had had it beside him for years. The 5000*l.* were of course forthcoming at once; but the banker hinted to the butcher the folly of losing the interest on so large a sum as 50,000*l.* by keeping a note for that amount in his drawers. "Voy, werry true, sir," said the latter, who was quite an illiterate man, "but I loikes the look on't so werry vell that I has got a t'other one of the same kind at home." Both the notes had somehow or other come into his hands, and he had determined not to part with them.

The next note under 1000*l.* is for 500*l.* There are others for 300*l.*, 200*l.*, 100*l.*, 50*l.*, and so on down to 5*l.*, which last amount is now the lowest. Previous to 1759, the Bank never

issued any notes of less value than 20*l.* That year it put a great number of 10*l.* notes into circulation. In 1793, 5*l.* notes were first issued, and in 1797, 1*l.* and 2*l.* notes were also brought into use when the Bank of England stopped cash payments. The currency of the latter ceased in point of fact in 1823, and in 1829 they were formally prohibited by act of parliament.

I have stated in a former part of this chapter that the Bank pays an annual average sum of 70,000*l.* to the Stamp Office, in the shape of composition for the stamp duty on its notes. Other banks pay a certain sum for every note as stamped, which renders it a much heavier tax on them than on the establishment in Threadneedle Street. While, therefore, the Bank of England never re-issues, but destroys all its notes on their return to it, the country banks re-issue theirs time after time until they have been worn to tatters. A gentleman largely connected with money and mercantile matters mentioned to me, a short time since, that on one occasion, when in the Bank of England, one of

the officers of the establishment showed him the remains of 40,000,000*l.* of notes which had recently been burned. This 'all that remained' of so large a sum was formed into a sort of solid substance. Its appearance was that of iron ore, of an irregular shape, and it was nearly as heavy. Its length was about three inches, its breadth two, and its weight, as far as he could guess, from ten to twelve ounces.

While the small notes were in circulation the Bank lost considerably by prosecutions for forgeries of those notes. In 1820, no fewer than 352 persons were convicted for this offence. Since their extinction its losses from the forgery of its notes have been quite trifling. It is otherwise with the forgeries committed on the public funds, for which the Bank, as being entrusted with the management of the national debt, is held liable. It transpired before the Select Parliamentary Committee in 1832, that the yearly losses of the Bank, from this source alone, average upwards of 40,000*l.* Its losses in 1803, from the frauds and forgeries of its principal

cashiers alone, were 340,000*l.*; and it is supposed that the forgeries committed by Fauntleroy must have cost the Bank a still larger sum. Some of the forgeries committed by the latter individual were equally characterised by their boldness and ingenuity. I may mention one communicated to me in December last, and which I have never seen in print.

Anticipating that a gentleman who employed him to transact his business for him, would call at his banking-house in Berners Street on a given day, he had prepared himself with a power of attorney to draw an immense sum the gentleman had in the Bank of England. Instead, however, of forging the signature of the gentleman before his arrival, he waited until he called and had seated himself on a chair. While so sitting, and eagerly engaged in familiar conversation with Fauntleroy, the latter adhibited the party's name to the forged power of attorney, and stepping into an adjoining apartment with the instrument in his hand, laid it down with the gentleman's forged signature wet upon it, on the desk of two

of his clerks to receive their signatures as attesting witnesses. Knowing the party was in Fauntleroy's apartment, and seeing the signature wet as if it had that moment proceeded from his own pen, suspicion of a forgery was of course out of the question. The principal clerk, on the attesting witnesses having put their names to the paper, dried the three signatures at once by the application of a piece of blotting-paper to them, and handing the instrument thus completed to Fauntleroy, the latter put it into his pocket on quitting the clerks' apartment. The gentleman had no sooner left the establishment, than Fauntleroy proceeded to the Bank of England and at once received the amount.

I have already mentioned that the yearly dividends on the capital immediately after the establishment of the Bank, was eight per cent. Since then the dividends have fluctuated considerably. In 1767, the dividend reached nine per cent. It afterwards gradually fell until, in 1729, it was as low as five and a-half per cent. From 1730 until 1747 it fluctuated

between six and five per cent. In 1753, it had fallen from five to four and a-half per cent. which is the lowest dividend ever paid. The highest was twelve per cent., which the shareholders received in 1805–6. From 1807 to 1823 the rate of dividend was ten per cent. For many years past there has been no variation in the amount of the dividends; they have been eight per cent. from 1823 up to the present time. These, however, are not the only profits the proprietors have derived from their stock. They have at various times received bonuses to the amount of nearly 7,000,000*l.* or 57½ per cent. on their subscribed capital. I may here mention that to the original capital of 11,642,400*l.* there was added, in 1806, twenty-five per cent. from accumulated profits, making the capital what I have before stated it to be, namely, 14,553,000*l.*

In 1833, after a lengthened parliamentary discussion, the charter of the Bank was renewed for the term of twenty years, subject to the right of parliament to withdraw its exclusive

privileges, on payment of the debt the public owes it, after the year 1844, on twelve months' notice. This renewal, however, was accompanied by certain conditions disadvantageous to the Bank. It was stipulated by parliament that in consideration of the continuance, for the term in question, of its exclusive privileges, the sum of 120,000*l.* should be annually deducted from the sum allowed it for the management of the public unredeemed debt. It was also provided, that all promissory notes of the Bank, issued at any place out of London, shall be payable at the places where they are issued. Before this time the Bank had the right, which right the directors always took special care to exercise, of preserving an entire secrecy as to the state of its affairs. It was then decreed that the Bank should hereafter be compelled to transmit to the chancellor of the exchequer, weekly, an account of the amount of bullion and securities in its possession, and also the amount of its notes in circulation, together with that of the deposits. The legislature further rendered it

obligatory on the Bank to consolidate such accounts at the end of each month, in order that an average state of its accounts for the preceding month should, for the information and satisfaction of the public, be published every month in the London Gazette.

Among the other leading circumstances connected with the renewal of the Bank Charter, one was that one fourth of the debt due by the public to it, should be repaid in the year 1834. The sum of 3,938,250*l.* was accordingly repaid that year by an assignment of three per cent. stock, previously held by the commissioners for the reduction of the national debt. The sum thus rendered available to the proprietors has not been divided amongst them, but has been left in the hands of the directors as capital. The debt now due by the public to the Bank is 10,914,750*l.*

Parliament, in renewing the charter of the Bank, conferred some new advantages on that establishment. It has made bank notes a legal tender everywhere except at the Bank itself, and

its branches. It has also repealed the usury laws in so far as regards all bills of exchange and promissory notes, not having more than three months to run. The Bank has likewise gained by the act of 1833, by certain alterations in the law restricting any other banking establishment with more than six partners, from issuing notes payable to bearer within 65 miles of London.

In a previous part of the chapter I brought down the position of the Bank to 1832. Not having access to official documents for the intermediate years, I pass them over and come to the state of matters in the last quarter of the year just ended.* The stock of bullion† was then 4,545,000*l.*, the circulation 17,361,300*l.* and the deposits were 13,330,000*l.* I have no means in this case of distinguishing between the private and public deposits. As the latter part of the year 1836 was a period of unusual pressure in the money market, the de-

* This was written in January last.

† The amount of silver held by the Banks is usually about one fifth of that of gold.

crease in the stock of bullion, as compared with the stock in hand at the end of 1835, is 2,081,000*l*, and the falling off in the deposits, as compared with the returns for the last quarter of 1835, has been no less than 3,339,000*l*. In the amount of circulation the variation has been remarkably small. It shows an increase of 40,000*l*.

The directors are bound down by the constitution of the Bank not to deviate from certain regulations in the administration of its affairs. They are prohibited from purchasing houses or lands, or investing any part of the stock in property of that or a similar nature. Their transactions on behalf of the Bank must be strictly of a monetary nature.

It is a very common but very erroneous notion, that the Bank of England is a bank of discount. It professes to be nothing of the kind, though it does discount bills to a certain extent. It represents itself to be only a bank of support; that is, an institution to support other banking establishments in times of difficulty and danger,

and through them the commercial credit of the country. How far it realises the object it professes to have in view, is a question on which a difference of opinion prevails. My own impression is, that though it has doubtless often acted beneficially for the commercial interests of the country, by the support it has afforded to other establishments when suffering severe pressure, it has, on the whole, either through the ignorance or caprice, or both, of the directors, inflicted the deepest injury on the trade and commerce of Great Britain. But on this point I shall afterwards have occasion to make some observations.

The average discounts of the Bank to mercantile men are extremely limited, considering the magnitude of the establishment. They have not, for the last twenty years, exceeded 2,000,000*l.* The largest extent to which the Bank ever discounted commercial paper, was 20,070,600*l.*; this was in 1810. The lowest amount of commercial paper under discount in Threadneedle Street, was 919,900*l.*; this was in

1830. In less than two years the Bank, on one occasion, reduced its mercantile discounts to the enormous extent of about 11,000,000*l.* This was in the crisis of 1816-17, when its aid was most needed. In 1815 the amount of commercial paper under discount was 14,947,100*l.*; in 1817 it was only 3,960,600*l.* The average annual losses of the Bank on its mercantile discounts, do not exceed 40,000*l.*

One principle theoretically laid down by the directors in managing the affairs of the Bank, is that they shall always have a stock of bullion on hand, equal in amount to one-third part of their liabilities. From this principle, however, they often find themselves obliged, by the force of unexpected circumstances, to deviate. The pressure on the money market in the latter end of last year, coupled with the unfavourable state of the exchanges, drained the coffers of the Bank to such an extent, that at one period the stock of bullion was only equal to about one-eighth, or one-seventh, part of its engagements. At other critical periods of the monied and com-

mercial markets, the gold in the coffers of the Bank has borne a still greater disproportion to the Bank's liabilities. To some of those periods I have already referred in detail; but though the amount of gold in the Bank often bears no proportion to the extent of its arrangements, and though the Bank be consequently exposed to the danger of stopping payment in periods of great monetary excitement, its ultimate solvency, is a matter beyond all doubt, if we could suppose it possible,—which, however, as I will afterwards show, we cannot do,—that its stoppage would not be followed by a total destruction of public credit.

Ever since the riots of 1780, when the mob contemplated an attack on the Bank, it has been constantly guarded by soldiers. With a view to the security of the establishment from fire or other casualties, the greatest possible precautions are taken.

The proprietors meet four times a year, when an abstract of the existing state of matters is submitted to them. Those, as formerly men-

tioned, who possess 500*l.* of stock, are entitled to speak and vote on all questions which may be brought forward for discussion. Three of the directors sit daily in what is called the parlour of the Bank. On Wednesdays a court of ten directors always sit to decide on all London applications, in the shape of notes or bills, for discounts. On Thursdays the whole court meet, when all notes exceeding 2,000*l.* are brought under consideration. All matters of importance are decided by a majority of the directors. Their number, I have already stated to be, exclusive of the governor and deputy-governor, twenty-four.

There are few sights, perhaps, better worth seeing in London than that of the interior of the Bank of England. However enlarged may have been the stranger's ideas of the extent of the establishment, the actual thing itself is sure to exceed them; he fancies, when taken from one apartment to another, that he is never to see the whole place; and he wonders as he goes from one part of it to another, and sees so many persons busily employed in them all, how there

can be occupation for so many. But that department of the Bank which, as might be expected, strikes the stranger with the greatest astonishment, is the large room, where the ordinary transactions of paying in and taking out money occur. The number of individuals employed in this department of the Bank alone, is, I should suppose from a rough guess, from seventy to eighty. Then there is the everlasting bustle caused by people coming in and going out, on the outside of the counters. This department, indeed, has all the appearance of a market-place. There is a crowd of persons constantly present, and they are always moving about as if on the open streets. But the most interesting sight of all, and that which is sure to rivet the stranger's eye as fixedly as if there were some charm in it, is the quantity of gold he sees lying scattered on all parts of the counters, coupled with the large bundles of notes he sees in the hands of the payers and receivers. Sovereigns lie here and there in heaps, like so many mountains in miniature. Addison de-

scribes in his own simple but expressive language, the annoyance which the poor peasants in the South of Europe must feel, when they see the oranges growing in such numbers on the trees around them, and yet dare not touch one of them. I have often thought the feeling of a person with an empty purse, who sees sovereigns in such abundance on the counters of the Bank of England, and yet dare not finger one of them, must be something similar; and, as if to aggravate this feeling, he sees the clerks throwing them about with an air of as much seeming indifference as if they were mere lumber. The extent of business done in this department of the Bank in the course of a day, is great beyond what any one could previously imagine within the bounds of probability. I am assured by one who has been many years in the establishment, that in the article of sovereigns alone, keeping out of view bank notes, a quarter of a million will sometimes exchange hands between the Bank and its creditors, in the course of the eight hours the establishment is open. I have heard

the entire amount of money, including bank post bills, &c. which is turned over, on an average, in one day at the Bank, variously estimated. The lowest estimate is 2,000,000*l.*, and the highest 2,500,000*l.* The quantity of business arising from private accounts is very great; the number of these varies as a matter of course. I believe it is at present between twelve and fourteen thousand.

I have spoken of the surprise amounting to bewilderment, which a stranger feels on his first going through the Bank of England. Those who visit the establishment to receive the dividends on the public funds, are so bandied about from place to place before they finger the money, that they feel the necessity of a guide as sensibly as if they had lost their way in some unknown region. It is quite common to see persons asking the way from one particular department to another, just as a stranger in the metropolis does the way from one street to another.

I have said that on all occasions the principal apartment of the Bank is crowded with persons

busily engaged in paying away and receiving money; but to see the business done at the Bank to the greatest advantage, it is necessary to visit the establishment on the first day on which the half-yearly dividends are payable. The scene which is then exhibited is indeed worth seeing. All the apartments for the various kinds of stock, and the passages leading from one part of the establishment to another, are crowded with persons of both sexes and of all classes. One may, on such occasions, philosophise to some advantage on human nature. A large proportion of those who draw their dividends on the first day on which they are payable, are persons who live up to their incomes, if not above them, and who choose rather to get into debt than to touch their stock. There are others who are misers, and whose sole delight consists in adding one sum to another. Such persons usually make a point of drawing the amount of their money the moment it becomes due; their eyes feast on the very sight of gold. Then, see the diversity of characters, and the

varied circumstances of those that have money in the funds. You may, on dividend day, see persons receiving their interest on large sums, for whose entire wardrobe you would not give sixpence, and whom, had you met them outside, your first impulse, if you have any feeling of compassion in your bosom, would have been to give them a few pence to preserve them, as you would have fancied, from absolute starvation. Who would believe it, yet such is the fact, that among those who have large sums—in some cases two or three thousand pounds—in the funds, are the sweepers of the crossings in our leading London thoroughfares? The circumstance of a black man, who for many years swept the crossing at the Fleet-street end of New Bridge-street, having at his death left a large sum of money to one of the late Alderman Waithman's daughters, because she had been in the habit of giving him something every time she passed,—is well known to many. A more recent case of the money-accumulating propensities of these crossings-sweeps, occurred a few months ago. If a para-

graph which appeared in most of the public journals was to be credited, the old man who swept the crossing for the previous twenty-five years at the Scotland Yard part of Whitehall, left behind him 1,600*l*. Let not the mention of these two cases of rich sweepers of the crossings, have the effect of leading any one to the conclusion, that all these gentry must have saved money. Perhaps nineteen out of twenty of them barely contrive to live from hand to mouth. I only allude to these instances as being apposite illustrations of my position, that on dividend day you will see at the Bank of England, drawing the interest of large sums, persons generally supposed to be in the most indigent circumstances.

I have sometimes endeavoured to form an estimate of the number of persons who receive their dividends on the first day of every half-year on which they are payable; but it is difficult to come to any very confident conclusion on the subject. I am satisfied I am under the mark when I say it exceeds ten thousand; perhaps I

should not be far wrong, were I to compute the sum paid away by the Bank on that day as dividends, at 500,000*l.*; but of course nothing like certain data to go on in such a case exists, so that this is only to be regarded as a rough guess.

The number of persons employed in one way or other in the Bank of England is so great, that they may be said to form a little community of themselves. The number of clerks alone, though occasionally varying, is never under 900. The number of engravers, and printers of notes, in the constant employment of the Bank, is 38. The salaries of the clerks vary from 500*l.* down to 75*l.* per annum. The entire amount paid to the various servants of the establishment, about 1,000 in number, is upwards of 200,000*l.*

Every one has his own department in the Bank, and no one knows what any of his colleagues are about. Two clerks may have stood for years next to each other, as regards the locality of the establishment, and yet know no more of one another's business than if they were in

the service of different employers. Perhaps there are few establishments in the world which afford a better exemplification of the accuracy and regularity which may be secured in the most extensive and most complicated concerns, by the adoption of a proper system of business.

It is a general remark, that the stability of the Bank of England must be co-existent with that of the British government itself. The position can only be admitted with certain qualifications. It is true, that the holders of bank stock, whether in the shape of notes or otherwise, have in one sense the security of the state itself for cash payments, inasmuch as government is debtor to the Bank to an amount approximating to that of the obligations of the latter to the public. But then it is of importance to recollect, that though the holders of bank stock might, and probably would, at all hazards, eventually lose nothing, yet it were quite possible, indeed certain, in the event of the Bank stopping payment, that the entire credit of the country would be destroyed, long before government could dis-

charge its obligations; while the necessary consequence of this destruction of public credit, would be the interposing of new obstacles to the state meeting the claims of the Bank, or of the public through the Bank. Supposing, for the sake of still more clearly illustrating my views on this important subject, that there were to commence immediately such a run on the Bank as would in one little fortnight drain it of its last sovereign, what or where would be the use of its applying to government for the payment of either the whole or a part of the 10,954,750*l.*, which the latter owes it? It is well known that government has not got an ounce of gold in its exchequer wherewith to meet any such demand. It is no less clear, that if in the assumed circumstances the Bank were to stop payment—which it must of necessity do, unless rescued from ruin by another Restriction Act—and that its creditors were to apply to government for the sum it owes the Bank, their application would be perfectly useless. Government in such a case, would like a private individual who may,

between debts due to him and other property he possesses, have more than would ultimately meet his obligations, though he cannot meet them at the moment,—government, in such a case, would require to ask time of the country. And how, let me ask, until some arrangement were come to, would the creditor of the Bank, and through the Bank, of the government, manage to carry on his own business? The stoppage of the Bank, it is clear as the sun at noon-day, would prove as completely destructive of public credit, and would as seriously derange the commercial relations of the country, as the failure of government itself.

As regards the way in which the Bank conducts its business, a considerable difference of opinion obtains. It is admitted on all hands that the directors are men of integrity, and are consequently actuated by the best intentions in all their measures; that is, that they are disposed to serve the public, where they conceive it can be done consistently with their own interests. The *judgment* with which the Bank

has acted on several most important occasions, is another question.

I hold that to the injudicious procedure of the Bank, was chiefly to be ascribed the frightful commercial convulsion of 1825—a convulsion which well nigh involved in one common ruin both the Bank and public credit. The conduct of the establishment in Threadneedle Street, some time previous to and during part of the appalling conjuncture of that year, was in direct violation of all the most obvious principles of banking. Over-trading, a spirit of speculation, &c., are usually assigned as the causes of that crisis? What led to this spirit of over-trading and reckless speculation? The abundance of money, and the consequent facility of obtaining discounts, is the obvious answer. Whence, then, this abundance of money? Why, principally from the excessive issues which the Bank of England made of its notes a short time previously. In the short space of two years,—namely, from February 1823 to February 1825, the Bank increased its issues to the enormous

amount of 3,200,000*l.* The country banks, which at that time invariably followed in the wake of the lady of Threadneedle Street, "went," as the scripture expression has it, "and did likewise." The precise extent to which these last increased their issues, we have no means of knowing; but it is understood that, on the most moderate calculation, it could not have been under from 30 to 40 per cent. Here then the currency of the country was clearly in excess; the consequence was, as already hinted, that any man with a tolerable coat on his back, whatever his character, found no difficulty in obtaining money; and it was with this fictitious capital that the mining and other joint-stock companies of the day were formed and carried on, until the bursting of the bubble. Another necessary effect of this excess in the currency, and one which contributed not a little to aggravate if not accelerate, the crisis of 1825, was the large exportations of British gold, which a little before took place to foreign countries. In the short space of three months, namely, in April, May,

and June, of the year just mentioned, the exportations of our gold to other countries, entered at the Custom-house (not to mention what must have found its way out of Great Britain through other channels,) were to the almost incredible amount of 2,834,000*l.* This was the first intimation the Bank seems to have had, or rather the first intimation it understood, of the serious error it had committed by the excessive issues of its paper. The directors naturally took the alarm at this rapid exportation of gold, and immediately began a sudden contraction of their notes. They at the same time saw, with but too great clearness, that the failure of the joint-stock speculations of the day was matter of certainty. This induced them to call in their notes with accelerated speed. In a few months they contracted the currency of the country to the extent of 3,500,000*l.* The results were precisely what might have been expected; public credit all at once received a severe shock. The notes of the country bankers—that body were always the first sufferers in a time of panic—

were returned upon them; and when they applied to the Bank of England for assistance in the hour of their difficulties—difficulties, be it recollected, as I have already mentioned, into which they were led by that establishment—it haughtily and peremptorily refused to afford them the most slender aid. It did more: not as yet aware of the full extent of the fiery trial which awaited itself, it actually converted their embarrassments—from which, with a little timely aid, they would soon have recovered—into the means of crushing them. Seventy of these establishments failed in a few weeks. The crisis which ensued spread over the width and breadth of England; and the country did not for years recover from the shock its credit then sustained.

So far my remarks have been condemnatory of the procedure of the Bank. There was one very important step it took when the crisis of December 1825 was at its height, which deserves all praise. In a few days of that month it increased its issues from 17,000,000*l.* to 25,000,000*l.*, making an addition to the cur-

rency of the country, in that short time, of 8,000,000*l.* On one of the days of the crisis, the Bank discounted mercantile bills alone to the number of 4,200. My praise of the Bank, on this occasion, however, must be qualified with this remark that it thus saved the country because it saw the impossibility of otherwise saving itself.

My observations respecting the disastrous results which are from time to time entailed on the credit and commerce of the country, by the injudicious conduct of the Bank, have as yet been brought no further down than the crisis of 1825. Unfortunately, at the very moment I write, fresh proofs of my views on the subject are forcing themselves on the public attention under the most appalling circumstances. What is the state of credit in London at this moment? Is it not worse than it was ever known at almost any former period? There seems to be no such thing as confidence among commercial men. Houses which have undergone the vicissitudes of more than half a century, and which, so far from being enfeebled by the changes of that long

and eventful period, grew stronger and stronger every successive year, have either fallen within the last few weeks, or are understood to be in a tottering condition. I may be told that the blame of this does not lie at the door of the Bank. I maintain it does; and no one will hold a contrary opinion who understands the subject, and is not prejudiced by some means or other in favour of the establishment of Threadneedle Street. The Bank and its friends have sought to fasten the blame of the existing crisis on the joint stock banks. It is not for me to vindicate them from imprudencies; it were folly to pretend they are immaculate; but I am thoroughly satisfied that the joint stock banks, so far from having either produced or created our present commercial embarrassments, have been, taken in the aggregate, the means of averting still more disastrous results. Had they followed the Bank of England in its sudden and unexpected contraction of its issues, I am satisfied there would have been no such thing as public credit in the country at this moment. It is to the fact of the

joint stock banks continuing to afford that aid to commerce which they had been extending to it before the country was overtaken by the existing crisis, that we are to ascribe our escape from calamities of a still more fearful magnitude than we are now encountering. To me it is also perfectly clear, that whatever errors the joint stock banks have committed of late have, as in the case of the country banks previous to 1825, arisen from their following in the track of the establishment in Threadneedle Street. They were, undoubtedly, excessive in their issues in the latter part of 1835, and the first six months of 1836, but the reason why they were so liberal in their discounts was because the Bank of England had set them the example.

Are doubts still entertained as to the soundness of my position, that the present commercial convulsion is to be traced up to the imprudent conduct, to call it by no harsher name, of the Bank of England? Then, perhaps, the best way to remove those doubts would be to point to the situation of the great American houses at this

moment. Will any one pretend that the joint stock banks had anything to do with bringing about the difficulties with which these houses now find themselves surrounded? Will any one be bold enough to deny that the establishment in Threadneedle Street has been the sole architect of all the calamities which have befallen those firms? It may, it is true, be said that they had speculated far beyond the amount of their capital. And what firm, or merchant in an extensive way, I should like to know, does not do this? There is not, perhaps, a commercial establishment of any note in the country, that does not, to a greater or less extent, at sometime or other, speculate beyond its available capital; and there are not many establishments in the country which could withstand the effects of such treatment as that which the American houses have received at the hands of the Bank. It is to this treatment, and not to any undue over-trading, though that perhaps was greater than was strictly prudent, that the American houses are to attribute the difficulties in which

they are now placed. Had the same facilities been afforded them as before for carrying on their business; had their paper been discounted as promptly as formerly, these houses would have gone on as usual, and we should never have heard a word, perhaps, of their spirit of over-trading. But so far from this, their paper, though as good as ever, was, from some caprice or other on the part of the Bank directors, scornfully rejected: and hence they were quite unexpectedly, and all at once, plunged into those difficulties which have proved fatal to some, and threaten to end in the ruin of the others.

I may be told that the Bank is now coming forward to their assistance. In doing so it is only, so far as regards those houses, adding insult to injury. The assistance of the Bank in this case may be useful to itself, and there can be no question it is beneficial to the public; but as respects the American firms, it deserves not the name. It is rather synonymous, considering the circumstances and the terms, with ruin. The conduct of the Bank resembles that of a man

who first breaks his neighbour's head, and then sets to work apparently to tinker it, but leaving it after all when done, so damaged that it never can be the same head it was.

This is not the place for anything in the shape of discussion on questions of political economy; but I may be allowed to remark, that the conviction is at length beginning to force itself on the minds of all reflecting, unbiassed men, that the currency and credit of the country cannot with safety be long entrusted to the irresponsible junto who preside over the destinies of the establishment in Threadneedle Street. Measures must be taken, and that ere the lapse of any lengthened period, to denude the Bank of its exclusive privileges. The monopoly it has so long had over the monetary affairs of the country must be broken up: until this is done, our trade and commerce can never be established on a solid foundation. The very knowledge that the extension or contraction of the currency is solely dependent on the caprice of a body of men, many of whom are ignorant

of the first principles of legitimate banking, is of itself enough to paralyse all mercantile enterprise. Were the conduct of the Bank guided by any fixed, well-defined principles, persons engaged in trade and commerce would know how to regulate their own affairs; but as no such principles, though laid down to a certain extent in theory, are embodied in practice, painful experience has taught mercantile men that they are completely at the mercy of the Bank, and that their best laid schemes of commercial enterprise may be completely frustrated in a moment and at a time least expected.

It is much to be regretted that the legislature should in 1833 have renewed the charter of the Bank at all, especially on the terms on which it has been extended to 1844. The fact of Parliament having granted a perpetuation of its monopoly to the Bank for the period in question, and on terms so advantageous to that establishments, show that either our legislators know very little or care very little about the public interests. But the question suggests itself,

whether, seeing that the public interests have been sacrificed to those of the corporation in Threadneedle Street, the charter of the Bank ought either to be withdrawn or modified? I confess that to me it appears it would be much more desirable, if it can be done without any serious injury to the public, to allow the Bank to enjoy its charter, without any alteration or modification, till the time of its expiry. A contrary course would only have the effect, unless some very peculiar emergency should arise, of lessening public confidence in acts of Parliament. The legislature having once granted certain privileges, for a specified time, to a body of men, ought to keep faith with that body, unless, as just mentioned, some very extraordinary circumstance should arise to justify a contrary course. But though it appears to me desirable in the highest degree, that whatever may be the errors of the Bank—provided always they be not absolutely and necessarily fatal to public credit—faith should be kept with it, yet government and the legislature would not only

be justified in affording every encouragement to such other establishments as are likely to act as a check on the abuse of the exclusive privileges of the Bank, but they are bound by considerations of their duty to the public to afford such encouragement to the establishments in question. The joint stock banks have been of unspeakable advantage in restraining the establishment in Threadneedle Street from doing yet greater injury to credit and commerce; and therefore, they are specially entitled to the protection of the government and the legislature of the country.

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